

**BRITISH WOMEN'S TRAVEL WRITINGS IN THE ERA
OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis intends to investigate how educated British women travellers challenged conventional female roles and how they participated in the political culture in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era. Part One will discuss those who tried hard to challenge or to correct traditionally-defined femininity and to prove themselves useful in their society. Many of them negotiated with and broadened the traditionally defined femininity in this age. Part Two will take Burke and Wollstonecraft's debate as the central theme in order to discuss chronologically the British women travellers' political responses to the Revolution controversy. When the Revolution degenerated into Terror and wars, the Burkean view became the main strand of British women travellers' political thinking. Under the threat of Revolutionary France and during the Napoleonic Wars, a popular conservatism and patriotism developed in Britain. Part Three will use the travel journals of the women who went to France during the Amiens Truce and after the fall of Napoleon in 1814 to analyse the formation of British national identity and nationalism in this period. In the end, these educated British women both stimulated and contributed to the formation of British political and cultural identity at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of feminism gives us new ideas about the society and the world we live in and offers new perspectives for looking at the world that we had thought and had been taught was right. The concept of separate sexual spheres, that is, of men being active in the public realm while women were confined to the domestic space, prevailed in academia in Taiwan until recent decades. Many historians were influenced by the research of British and American scholars in the 1970s and 1980s, such as the impressive studies of Nancy Armstrong, Leonore Davidoff, Catherine Hall, Mary Poovey and Elaine Showalter.¹ They used this concept to analyse eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British society, and to deduce that women were restricted to a limited sphere, thus developing their own narrative genre and history.

As my knowledge of history increased, however, I began to doubt that it was effective to look at historical practice via this approach. It is remarkable that the bulk of the secondary literature about the Revolution debate and British political ideology between 1789 and 1815 is based on men's accounts. Nevertheless, the lack of women's voices in the secondary literature did not mean that women did not actually respond to the great events of their day. This thesis seeks to bring out that, women's

¹ See Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction : a Political History of the Novel* (New York ; Oxford, 1987); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1987); Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer: Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (Chicago, 1984); and Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own : British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing* (Princeton, 1977).

voices, though not as loud as men's, could indeed be heard in the contemporary literary public. Some of their opinions were influential. Moreover, when we come to study the life and works of Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), a liberal thinker of the late eighteenth century, who has been claimed by today's feminists as a leading heroine of western feminism, we find that she was one of the most influential thinkers in the discussion of the French Revolution, of the British constitution, of liberty and of men and women's natural rights. It is beyond question that Wollstonecraft participated in the development of British public opinion at the end of the eighteenth century.

Thus, while some feminist researchers tend to differentiate between men and women in history, and to condemn the social environment, which was constructed by men, as the only reason for females' suffering and silence in history, I came to the view that we should not omit women's voices. They were growing louder especially from the late eighteenth century, in the forging of important issues of the day and national identity, as many historians and literary critics such as Anne K. Mellor and Linda Colley have argued in the past two decades.² As I shall explore throughout the thesis, a growing numbers of educated and politically literate British women who regarded themselves as capable of and having a responsibility to discuss the issues of

² See Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington, 2000) and Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2nd edn., London, 2005).

political and social reform and who revealed the love of their country in various forms of writing. They joined the discussion of important issues with men, and had a certain influence in it.

This thesis, therefore, intends to investigate how these educated British women challenged conventional female roles and how they participated in and, for some women writers whose works were received well in public, influenced the creation of political culture in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic era. The primary sources for this thesis derive from British women travellers' voluminous writings, including their journals, diaries, letters and memoirs, written during and after their journeys to France between 1789 and 1815. Some of these sources were written in other European nations, such as in Italy, Germany and Belgium, but they still reveal the authors' ideas about the conflict posed by the Revolution and the political chaos it brought. I shall use these sources as well. The thesis will also refer to contemporary political pamphlets, especially the works of Edmund Burke (1729-1792) and Mary Wollstonecraft, in order to discuss the political ideas of these women travellers, and how their minds changed as they experienced life in France.

A. Literature Review

When we come to study the subject of 'travel' in the eighteenth century, the general picture which we have of the Continental tour and of tourists is of a male world. The

role of female travellers is often neglected. Several interesting and detailed pieces of research on eighteenth-century British travellers in Europe and their investigations of the manners, living conditions and past glories of the western Europe have been made by scholars such as Jeremy Black, Christopher Hibbert, John Lough, Constantia Maxwell, William Edward Mead, and Geoffrey Trease. The primary focus of the research, however, has been on men: men are the spectators and (foreign) women are the spectacle.³ It is only recently that there has been any focus on women's travel accounts. Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave have edited a series of women's travel writings, bearing the title *Women's Travel Writings in Revolutionary France*, in seven volumes.⁴ Five first-hand accounts of Revolutionary France written by those women who appreciated the cause of the French Revolution (even the conservative Charlotte West celebrated the fall of the Bastille at the beginning), are republished with a general introduction to each work. These seven volumes include Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Scenes which Passed in Various*

³ Jeremy Black, *The British and the Grand Tour* (London, 1985) and *The British Abroad: the Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1999); Christopher Hibbert, *The Grand Tour* (London, 1987); John Lough, *France on the Eve of Revolution. British Travellers' Observations 1763-1788* (London, 1987); Constantia Maxwell, *The English Traveller in France, 1698-1815* (London, 1932); William Edward Mead, *The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston, 1914); and Geoffrey Trease, *The Grand Tour: A History of the Golden Age of Travel* (New York, 1967). Moreover, for a general introduction to travel in the eighteenth century and the Grand Tour, see James Buzzard, 'The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 37-52; Jeremy Black, 'British Travellers in Europe in the Early Eighteenth Century', *Dalhousie Review*, 61 (1981-1982), 655-67. John Towner has done research on the role of the grand tour in the history of tourism in *The European Grand Tour, circa 1550-1840: a Study of its Role in the History of Tourism* (Ph.D. Thesis, Birmingham, 1984).

⁴ *Women's Travel Writings in Revolutionary France*, part 1, ed. Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave (3 vols., London, 2007), and *Women's Travel Writings in Revolutionary France*, Part 2, ed. Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave (4 vols., London, 2008).

Departments of France during the Tyranny of Robespierre (1796); Helen Maria Williams, *A Tour in Switzerland* (1798); Charlotte West, *A Ten Years' Residence in France* (1821); Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France* (1798) and Anne Plumptre, *A Narrative of a Three Years' Residence in France, 1802-5* (1810).

Otherwise, most of the research on women travellers either focuses on those in the Victorian period, or else on their contributions to literary history, such as the language of aesthetics. Scholars who look mainly at female travellers of the Victorian period are especially interested in exploration narratives and the study of colonialism and imperialism. For example, Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) explores the way in which travel writing has constructed an image of the non-European world for European readership without omitting the role of women's travel writing. Sara Mills' *Discourses of Difference: an Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (1991) uses feminist discourse to examine nineteenth-century female travel narratives, the travellers' identity and their relationship with colonialism.⁵

⁵ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992); Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: an Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London, 1991). Indeed, many scholars have been concerned with nineteenth-century female travellers beyond Europe and colonialism and post-colonialism in recent years, such as *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*, ed. Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (New York, 1994); Billie Melman, *Women's Orients: English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918* (Basingstoke, 1992); Shirley Foster, *Across New Worlds: Nineteenth Century Women Travellers and Their Writings* (New York, 1990); Dea Birkett, *Spinsters Abroad: Victorian Lady Explorers* (Oxford, 1989); Alison Blunt, *Travel, Gender, and Imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa* (New York, 1994); Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze* (Calcutta, 1998); Catherine Barnes Stevenson, *Victorian Women Travel Writers in Africa* (Boston, 1982); Patricia Romero, *Women's Voices on West Africa* (Princeton, 1992). Most of these works discuss travel writing, colonialism and orientalism, with

In addition, several scholars have explored the relationship between travel writing and aesthetics. Elizabeth A. Bohls examines how female travel writing fits into the aesthetic ideas of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and re-examines the identity of these travel writers in *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716-1818* (1995).⁶ This critique analyses female narratives' place, identity and influence in the masculine discourse of aesthetics and of the 'sublime' in the late eighteenth century.⁷ It should be noted that the rise of recreational travel and 'pedestrian' travel within Britain during the Romantic period has also attracted some scholarly attention. Thus, Malcolm Andrews, Robin Jarvis and Carole Fabricant, among others, have focused on the subject of 'picturesque' aesthetics and the relation of literature to aesthetics.⁸

Furthermore, a few studies focus on travel literature's influence on literary form

reference to Edward Said's great and influential work: *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London, 1991).

⁶ Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics, 1716-1818* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁷ According to *A Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century History*, 'While the adjective "sublime" was used from the sixteenth century to describe grand or elevated writing, it was only in the early eighteenth century that "the sublime", as a substantive, became a common topic of critical discussion', in *A Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century History*, ed. Jeremy Black and Roy Porter (London, 2001), p. 706. In Edmund Burke's highly influential book, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), he explained that 'terror is in all cases whatsoever . . . the ruling principle of the sublime'. The sublime applies to large, grand parts of nature. In addition, as he put it, 'The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature . . . is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other.' The sublime was pleurably awesome, frightening or overwhelming. Edmund Burke, *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (London, 1757), pp. 41-2.

⁸ Malcolm Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque: The Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Aldershot, 1989); Robin Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (Basingstoke, 1997). On the Romantic landscape within British Isles, see also Stephen Hebron, *The Romantics and the British Landscape* (London, 2006); Carole Fabricant, 'The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape in the Eighteenth Century', in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century British Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Ralph Cohen, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985).

in the British Romantic period. They explore female writers in addition to ‘The Big Six’ of the Romantic literature in England: Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, Byron, and Keats. Essay collections such as *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel 1775-1844* (2000) and *Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts* (1992), Mitzi Myers’ ‘Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Letter Written in Sweden: Toward Romantic Autobiography*’ (1979), and Mary A. Favret’s *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics and the Fiction of Letters* (1993) are examples of this kind of study. By and large, Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), Helen Maria Williams’ *Letters from France* (1790-95) and Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) are the most important works in these scholars’ critiques.⁹

It should be noted that there have been many publications on the subject of women writers and political identity during the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars in recent decades. Most of the heroines were prominent travellers as well, for instance Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams (1761–1827), Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823), Frances Burney (1752–1840), Maria Edgeworth (1768–1849), and Mary Shelley (1797–1851). In this category, of course, what is being discussed is

⁹ *Romantic Geographies: Discourses of Travel 1775-1844*, ed. Amanda Gilroy (Manchester, 2000); *Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts*, ed. Stephen Copley and John Whale (London, 1992); Mitzi Myers, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Letter Written in Sweden: Toward Romantic Autobiography*’, *Studies in Eighteenth-century Culture*, 8 (1979), 165-85; Mary A. Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics and the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge, 1993).

these women's identity as writers of political pamphlets and novels, not their role as travel writers. The essays collected in *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution* (2001) provide a remarkable survey of British women's writings, little-known and well-known, on the French Revolution during the early Romantic period, and these women's participation in social, religious, political, philosophical and economic debates. The authors of *Rebellious Hearts* challenge the prevailing models of 'domestic women' and claim that women did contribute to the public sphere and to the most heated printed debates of their day during the Revolutionary age.¹⁰

Another outstanding essay collection, *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830* (2001), also challenges the interpretation of a binary distinction between male public and female private spheres. By examining women's diverse cultural activities, including their philosophical and political writings, and their contribution to European intellectual movements and in the consumption of culture, it becomes clear that, while some feminist theorists simply use the dichotomy between public and private to explain the inequalities between men and women, they underestimate women's role in modern history.¹¹ Anne K. Mellor also explores various genres of

¹⁰ Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke, 'British Women Writers and the French Revolution, 1789-1815', in *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, ed. Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke (Albany, 2001), p. 9.

¹¹ *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, ed. Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona Ó Gallchoir and Penny Warburton (Cambridge, 2001).

literature and is able to demonstrate British women writers' influence in shaping national opinions and redefining female character and women's role in society from 1780-1830. No matter whether they were conservatives or radicals, these women revealed their full participation in the literate public. In addition, the 'new women' of virtue and reason could not only construct their individual homes, but be the 'mothers of the Nation'.¹² In addition, works by Steven Blakemore, Gary Kelly, Eleanor Ty, and others focus on a select number of well-known British women writers' responses to the Revolution and their active role in the creation of political, philosophical, social and gender opinions.¹³

There also exist some well-studied bibliographies about travel writings. Edward Godfrey Cox has published three volumes of extensive and fascinating studies on the literature of travel writing: *A Reference Guide to the Literature of Travel*.¹⁴ The first volume is devoted to 'the Old World', the second to 'the New World', and the third to 'Great Britain'. The publications are listed in chronological order from the earliest date down to the year 1800, within geographical sections, and are accompanied by indications of their contents and value. Though some women's travel writings are absent, the author has compiled a useful reference guide to books, especially male

¹² Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation*.

¹³ Steven Blakemore, *Crisis in Representation: Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, and the Rewriting of the French Revolution* (Madison, 1997); Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing and Revolution, 1790-1827* (Oxford, 1993); and Eleanor Ty, *Unsex'd Revolutionaries: Five Women Novelists of the 1790s* (Toronto, 1993).

¹⁴ Edward Godfrey Cox, *A Reference Guide to the Literature of Travel* (3 vols., Seattle, 1949).

travel accounts, on foreign travels printed in Great Britain before and including the year 1800.

British Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of British Diaries Written between 1442 and 1942 and *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* also include some bibliographies of travel journals.¹⁵ Jane Robinson's *Wayward Women: a Guide to Women Travellers* (1990) selected some four hundred women's travel accounts in history, among them eleven women who had visited France between 1789 and 1815 or had responded to the Revolution in their European travels.¹⁶ These eleven women are Anne Carter (?-?), Lady Elizabeth Craven (1750-1828), Catherine Davies (1773-1841), Charlotte Anne Eaton (1788-1859), a Lady, the author of *A Sketch of Modern France* (1798), Hester Piozzi (1741-1821), Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, Marianna Starke (1761/2-1838), Clarissa Trant (1800-1844) and Mary Wollstonecraft. There are still some more women travel writers that Robinson did not include, such as Grace Dalrymple Elliott (1754?-1823) and Anne Plumptre (1760-1818). As I will show in this thesis, more than fourteen female travellers published their reflections on the Revolutionary France and the conflicts of the Revolution during their lifetime. Many left their opinions in letters and journals and most of these writings were published posthumously.

¹⁵ *British Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of British Diaries Written between 1442 and 1942*, ed. W. Matthews (London, 1950) and *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, ed. George Watson (Cambridge, 1969-1977).

¹⁶ Jane Robinson, *Wayward Women: a Guide to Women Travellers* (Oxford, 1990).

Despite the richness of women travellers' responses to the conflict of the Revolution and to the Napoleonic wars, few studies have emphasized their participation in the printed political debate of the 1790s and their role in reinforcing national stereotypes in the Napoleonic period.¹⁷ In the Chapter 7 of his book *Ladies and the Grand Tour* (2002), 'Revelation and Revolution', Brian Dolan discusses the biographical background and travel experiences of Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, Mary Berry and Mariana Starke, among others, in Revolutionary France. He also uses these women's eye-witness accounts to examine their disillusionment with political reality and their observations of Napoleon Bonaparte (except for Wollstonecraft who had never seen Bonaparte).¹⁸ We have a vivid representation of these women writers' life anecdotes and writings in Revolutionary France, yet Dolan's book lacks a deep discussion on the conflicts caused by the Revolution and wars against France, which had attracted these women travel writers' eyes.

The Social Quest: the Expanded Vision of Four Women Travelers in the Era of the French Revolution (1991) by Sandra Adickes is again a discussion of the most well-known British women travel writers' life and travel journals in the age of the

¹⁷ For example, H. T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (Oxford, 1985) and *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815*, ed. H. T. Dickinson (London, 1989); *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, ed. Mark Philp (Cambridge, 1991); Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1979); and *The Impact of the French Revolution: Texts from Britain in the 1790s*, ed. Iain Hampsher-Monk (Cambridge, 2005).

¹⁸ Brian Dolan, *Ladies and the Grand Tour* (London, 2002).

French Revolution.¹⁹ Adickes analyses the ‘social quest’ of Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams, Ann Radcliffe and Mary Berry (1763–1852) chapter by chapter, and focuses on these women’s political awareness and the self-transformation which they reflected in their writings. This book, alone with Dolan’s, offers readers a basic understanding of women travel writers and travel writings in the age of the Revolution. Katherine Turner’s work, *British Travel Writers in Europe 1750-1800: Authorship, Gender, and National Identity* (2001), analyses authorship by both sexes, and the notion of Britishness, together with the public sphere and the construction of national identity.²⁰ The longest chapter in Turner’s book, ‘the Rise of the Woman Travel Writer’, focuses on women travel writers’ femininity, their class and national identity in the second half of the eighteenth century before the French Revolution. The next chapter ‘Revolution and revision: the 1790s’ discusses the travel writers’ response to the French Revolution, in which chapter the works of Helen Maria Williams, Ann Radcliffe and two anonymous English women are discussed.²¹

B. British Women as Travellers and Travel Writers

¹⁹ Sandra Adickes, *The Social Quest: the Expanded Vision of Four Women Travelers in the era of the French Revolution* (New York, 1991).

²⁰ Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe 1750-1800: Authorship, Gender, and National Identity* (Aldershot, 2001).

²¹ In the chapter of ‘Revolution and revision: the 1790s’, Katherine Turner discusses An English Lady, *A Residence in France, during the Years 1792, 1793, 1794, and 1795; described in a Series of Letters from an English Lady: with general and incidental remarks on the French character and manners* (1797); Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France. In a Series of Letters to a Lady of Fashion. Written in the Years 1796 and 1797, during a Tour through France* (1798); Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the West Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine* (1795) and the works of Helen Maria Williams during the Revolution, especially *A Tour in Switzerland* (1798).

This thesis is not a study of female travel in the eighteenth-century Britain for its own sake. Rather it is a study, using British female travel writings as the main sources, which investigates how these women responded to their place in society and, most important of all, how they responded to the conflicts and questions caused by the Revolution and the wars against France. It is still necessary to briefly explain the role of ‘travel’ and ‘female travel writers’ in the eighteenth century.

The *Critical Review* described the late eighteenth century thus:

This may be called the age of peregrination; for we have reason to believe, that the desire of seeing foreign countries never before so diffusively operated.²²

Indeed the late eighteenth century witnessed a climax of European travel.²³ This was particularly true following the end of the Seven Years’ War and the Peace of Paris in 1763, for, as Turner has pointed out, ‘road surfaces’, ‘vehicle technology’ and ‘accommodation’ had also greatly improved.²⁴ British travellers increasingly crossed the Channel and visited the European Continent, therefore mostly heading to France and Italy. European travel, which was often called ‘the Grand Tour’, has a long history going back to Elizabethan times, and had been a custom for young British gentlemen with educational purposes in mind.²⁵ During the course of the eighteenth

²² *Critical Review*, 19 (1797), 361, quoted in Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe*, p. 2.

²³ See, for example, Trease, *The Grand Tour*, p. 179, and Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, p. 10, pp. 24-5.

²⁴ Turner, *British Travel Writers*, p. 2.

²⁵ For the general introduction of the Grand Tour, see Buzzard, ‘The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)’, pp. 37-52; Jeremy Black, ‘British Travellers in Europe in the Early Eighteenth Century’, 655-67; Hibbert, *The Grand Tour*, pp. 10-25; and Trease, *The Grand Tour*, pp. 1-15.

century, however, the traditional social composition of the Grand Tour, that is to say of members of the young aristocracy, gentry and their tutors, altered considerably as a result of the rise of recreational travel among the leisured middle class.²⁶ A growing number of older travellers, women and families travelled to the Continent in the late eighteenth century.²⁷

Most of the British women who travelled prior to 1760 were aristocrats, and were with their husbands' diplomatic missions. None of them published their travel journals before 1760. *Turkish Embassy Letters* (1763), written by Mary Montagu, was among the first to be published in the second half of the eighteenth century. There were growing criticisms of the Grand Tour, because many intellectuals thought, often with xenophobic attitudes, that to travel abroad was to put British young men at moral risk.²⁸ In the course of the eighteenth century, especially during the second half of the century, despite British men's habit of frequently visiting Paris, as Gerald Newman stresses, the influence of French culture was regarded as a French 'disease' and 'poison'.²⁹ French culture was perceived as lacking morality.³⁰ It was therefore dangerous for Britons, both men and women, to journey to France and to risk infection by the French 'disease'. These criticisms were directed to male travellers,

²⁶ See the analysis of Turner, *British Travel Writers*, p.3.

²⁷ See, for instance, Trease, *The Grand Tour*, pp. 191-7.

²⁸ For the discussion of the disapproval of the Grand Tour, see, for example, Turner, *British Travel Writers*, pp. 58-67, Black, *The British Abroad*, pp. 297-303.

²⁹ Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Culture History 1740-1830* (New York, 1997), p. 71.

³⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 63-84, 145-8.

because the numbers of women travellers were few compared to men. But, according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* (1762)³¹ and to the conservative conduct books of the second half of the eighteenth century, such as those written by James Fordyce (1720-1796), John Gregory (1724-1773) and Thomas Gisborne (1758-1846), women indeed were not encouraged to participate in public activities.³² These authors stressed female virtue and duty in the domestic environment. According to Gisborne, other occupations and activities outside the 'sphere of domestic life',³³ such as those about politics, the conduct of government, commerce, etc., were assigned to men, because women lacked 'the powers of close and comprehensive reasoning, and of intense and continued application'.³⁴ Fordyce also argued that 'war, commerce, politics, exercises of strength and dexterity, abstract philosophy, and all the [abstruse] science are most properly the province of men'.³⁵ Thus, he hoped that women would understand their true nature and remained in the domestic sphere which suited them mostly.

Furthermore, to escape domestic constraints, to get away and to conquer the outside world were all considered to be typical male experiences. As Karen Lawrence

³¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, trans. Barbara Foxley (London, 1955).

³² For the most influential conduct books for women in the second half of the eighteenth century, see James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* (2 vols., 5th edn., 1770); Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (London, 1797); John Gregory, *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* (London; Edinburgh, 1781); and Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education: with a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune* (2 vols., 6th edn., London, 1799).

³³ Gisborne, *An Enquiry*, p. 20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁵ Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women*, pp. 210-1.

puts it, 'it is a Western cultural truism that Penelope waits while Odysseus voyages'.³⁶

As we see in most western literatures, the life plan for most women was waiting at home for their husbands, children, or some unexpected strangers. Lawrence goes on, 'Indeed, one can say that despite their differences in energy and focus, adventure literature and the domestic novel share a powerful assumption: that "woman's place" is, first and foremost, at home'.³⁷ And to wait is in a sense to be powerless. Nevertheless, as this thesis will argue, there have been women who did not want to wait and to be passive. Since the late eighteenth century, more and more women expressed their eagerness to journey to the European Continent and some even took a trip by themselves.

In this century, 'to journey to Europe', 'to keep a travel journal', and 'to publish the journal' became popular among the upper-middle class.³⁸ Moreover, according to Paul Kaufman's research, travel literature achieved a large readership, second only to novels, in the eighteenth century.³⁹ Reciprocally, public demand for this literature

³⁶ Karen Lawrence, *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Traditions* (New York, 1994), p. ix. Lawrence is concerned with how women's travel (both in Europe and beyond Europe) and travel writing intervene in a genre traditionally defined as masculine from the seventeenth century to today, and points out the instability of boundaries between such categories as the exotic/masculine and the domestic/feminine. On eighteenth-century travel literature, she focuses on Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (London, 1796) and Frances Burney's novel *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* (London, 1814).

³⁷ Lawrence, *Penelope Voyages*, p. x.

³⁸ See the *Critical Review*, 19 (1797), 361, quoted in Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe*, p. 2. For the abundant narratives of tours, see, how, in 1792, the *Critical Review* declared that 'Travels are a species of writing which, besides being particularly easy in point of composition, prove highly gratifying to curiosity. The narratives which have been published of the fashionable Tour of Europe are therefore now become extremely numerous'. *Critical Review*, 5 (1792), 294, quoted in Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe*, p. 3.

³⁹ On library holdings and borrowings, see Paul Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users: Collected*

stimulated the publication of travel writing. Travel literature therefore had a social impact on public opinion in this age. As we shall see in the following chapters, in the age of the French Revolution, some writers chose to write in the form of a travel journal in order to assert the claim that what they wrote about France was authentic. In the late eighteenth century, growing numbers of women followed the fashion to journey to Europe and consciously kept a travel journal, though some might not publish it immediately. A few travel writers such as Helen Maria Williams, Mary Wollstonecraft, Ann Radcliff, some anonymous 'ladies', Frances Elizabeth King (1757–1821), Anne Plumptre, Charlotte Anne Eaton and Mary Shelley shared their observations of the Continent and political responses to the Revolution and Napoleon with their readers. Their writings about political, cultural and social issues in the guise of travel literature carried an influence in contemporary society that should not be underestimated. Those who did not publish their travel letters and journals immediately or during their lifetime also revealed their understanding and responses to contemporary issues about reform, the rights of men, the outbreak of war and the future development of their nation. None of the women who are investigated in this thesis went to the Continent merely as travellers pursuing entertainment and fashion; they clearly knew about the big events of the outside world and wanted to express

Papers in Library History (London, 1969), p. 31, 72. See also John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago, 2000), ch. 4, 'Readers and the Reading Public', especially pp. 177-81.

their opinions on them.

C. The Waves of Travel

Due to the unstable relations between Britain and France, travelling occurred in waves in accordance with the state of relation between these two countries (See Appendix A).⁴⁰ Generally speaking, in the second half of the eighteenth century, especially after the end of the Seven Years' War, as Colley points out, the British gained self-confidence following the reduction in the French threat,⁴¹ and as a result many people made up their minds to visit Europe at this relatively quiet time. As an anonymous English 'Lady' wrote, 'it has been observed that "there is scarcely any mind so sluggish as not to feel a certain degree of rapture at the thought of travelling"'.⁴² French culture and fashion had always been a major attraction for British people who wanted to travel to the Continent. After the outbreak of the French Revolution in July 1789, despite the chaos it brought, voyaging across the Channel was still possible. People with republican enthusiasms, such as Helen Maria Williams and Mary Wollstonecraft, ventured to France at this particular moment in order to witness such dramatic events and write down their reflections and observations as

⁴⁰ See Black, *The British Abroad*, pp. 7-13; Lough, *France on the Eve of Revolution*, pp. 1-4; and Appendix A of the thesis, quoted from Tower, *The European Grand Tour*, figure 1.

⁴¹ See Colley, *Britons*, p. 52, 101.

⁴² Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France. In a Series of Letters to a Lady of Fashion. Written in the Years 1796 and 1797, during a Tour through France* (London, 1798), p. 1. This quotation comes from Thomas Holcroft's novel *Anna St. Ives* (1792). Holcroft's sentence is: 'I scarcely ever knew a mind so sluggish as not to feel a certain degree of rapture, at the thoughts of travelling'. *Anna St. Ives* was the first Jacobin novel to appear in Britain, which described the conflict between Burkean conservative Britain and his own radical utopia. Note although quoting from a Jacobin novel, this Lady's political stance was difficult to judge according to her travel writing.

journalists. When the Revolution developed into the Terror, however, few people risked travelling to Paris. Those who journeyed to Europe made a detour and avoided France. As one English lady noted in her travel letters, a female innkeeper at Chantilly told her that she disliked the French Revolution, because since the events began the quantity of British travellers had decreased greatly, and had affected her income badly.⁴³ Many French innkeepers had similar complaints. They wanted peace to return so that British travel lovers would come again and bring them more income.⁴⁴

In 1793, Britain had joined the First Coalition and waged war against France and the political environment in France rapidly became hostile to foreigners. On 9 October 1793, according to Michael Rapport, the Convention ‘decreed the arrest of British and Hanoverian subjects and the seizure of their property in France’ and it ‘wanted no exceptions to the law’.⁴⁵ A few days later, those British radicals who were previously protected by their political stance were now put in prison. Thus, plenty of female Britons who remained in France after the end of 1793 were to become prisoners. Helen Maria Williams,⁴⁶ Charlotte West (d. 1821)⁴⁷ and Grace Dalrymple

⁴³ The ‘Lady’ wrote: ‘[A] mistress of the inn exclaimed her opinion most violently against the revolution and the *revolutionaries*, lamenting- “que sa profession étoit bien tombée; car”, added she with a sigh, “nous ne voyons plus de guinées, depuis que les Anglois, les *cher Anglois*, ne voyagent plus”.’ Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France*, p. 113.

⁴⁴ The same opinions were told by the French people again during the Peace of Amiens. See, for example, Frances Elizabeth King, *A Tour in France, 1802* (London, 1809), pp. 85-6.

⁴⁵ Michael Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship in Revolutionary France: the Treatment of Foreigners 1789-1799* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 200-1.

⁴⁶ Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France, from the Thirty-first of May 1793, till the Twenty-eighth of July 1794, and of the Scenes which have Passed in the Prisons of Paris* (2 vols., London, 1795) i, p. 17.

⁴⁷ Charlotte West, *A Ten Years' Residence in France, During the Severest Part of the Revolution, from*

Elliott,⁴⁸ among others, were sent to prison. Wollstonecraft escaped the police sweep, because she had moved to the western outside Paris to Neuilly-sur-Seine in June 1793,⁴⁹ and obtained American citizenship by registering as the wife of her American lover, Gilbert Imlay (1754-1828), at the American Embassy.⁵⁰ Moreover, orders permitted 'French corsairs to seize neutral ships which carried enemy cargo'.⁵¹ Although, according to Rapport, 'American vessels were exempted from this provision on 1 July', numerous American ships had still been detained since autumn of 1793.⁵² Thus, the hostile law towards foreigners persisted beyond the Terror.⁵³ Therefore, Martha Russell (1766-1807) and Mary Russell (1768-1839) were captured by a French naval vessel in their journey to New England in the summer of 1794.⁵⁴

But after the execution of Robespierre in July 1794, the Terror would come to an end. Political prisoners were finally freed. Yet, due to the hostile relations between the two countries at the end of the century, most Britons, such as Ann Radcliffe, still made a detour from their usual route to Europe (setting off from Dover and arriving at

the Year 1787 to 1797, Containing Various Anecdotes of Some of the Most Remarkable Personages of that Period (London, 1821), pp. 58-9.

⁴⁸ Grace Dalrymple Elliott, *Journal of my Life during the French Revolution* (London, 1859), pp. 166-7.

⁴⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft to Gilbert Imlay, Neuilly-sur-Seine, June 1793, in Mary Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Ralph M. Wardle (Ithaca, 1979), note 1, p. 231.

⁵⁰ Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (2nd edn., London, 1992), p. 207-8.

⁵¹ Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship*, p. 240.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 240-1.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁵⁴ Martha Russell, *Journal of a Tour to America in 1794 - 1795*, typescript, (3 vols., Birmingham City Archives) MSS 660349, i, pp.15-16.

Calais, France) but by-passing the main cities of France.⁵⁵ Of course, there were still some women who were interested in the changes in France and who chose to venture to this country. An anonymous 'Lady' was one of the examples, who, with 'trepidation', went to France in 1796 due to her desire to trace the effects of 'one of the greatest political changes which the world has ever experienced'.⁵⁶ After the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) at the century's end, some British radicals believed that Revolutionary ideals would be fulfilled under his leadership. Even some conservatives thought that Bonaparte might bring peace to France and Europe. Yet the ambitious Bonaparte brought extreme danger to Britain's borders once again. Travelling stopped again until the announcement of the peace preliminaries on 1 October 1801.

Travel across the Channel resumed around October 1801. The signing of the Treaty of Amiens on 25 March 1802 led to a surge of travellers.⁵⁷ Maria Edgeworth (1768–1849) landed at Calais in October 1802 with her family. She described in her novel *Leonora*, that such large numbers of visitors 'hurried about Paris from one

⁵⁵ Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the West Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine* (London, 1795).

⁵⁶ Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France*, pp. 1-2. She made a tour through France between 1796 and 1797, in company with her husband, and published her travel letters anonymously. As a radically-inclined Whig, with a good understanding of Enlightenment philosophy and an interest in reading Jacobin novels, she was eager to see how this 'heart of enlightened Europe [which was] celebrated for [its] attachment to monarchy, and were proud of the splendor of their civil and religious institutions' became after a total subversion of their government and religion at the conclusion of the eighteenth century. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁷ For the details of the Treaty of Amiens, see John D. Grainger, *The Amiens Truce: Britain and Bonaparte, 1801-1803* (Woodbridge, 2004).

spectacle to another, saw the opera, and the playhouses, and the masked balls, and the gaming houses, and the women of the Palais Royale ...; went through the usual routine of presentation and public dinners, drank French wine, damned French cookery, and “came home content.”⁵⁸ Anne Plumptre also set off for France in the company of Amelia Opie (1769–1853) and her husband, William Opie.⁵⁹ Plumptre witnessed the vast groups of Britons continually travelling to the Continent from the moment that the preliminaries of peace were signed, and she thought this phenomenon strongly confirmed the comment that ‘a passion for foreign travel is more prevalent among islanders than among the inhabitants of a continent’.⁶⁰ This phenomenon came to an end after May 1803 following the declaration of war once more by the British government. Communications across the Channel were terminated for another decade and more.

During the renewed period of war, between 700 and 800 British civilians who had not been able to return to Britain before May 1803 became *détenus* at Verdun and other places in France for ten years.⁶¹ According to the decree of 23 May, ‘all the English enrolled in the militia, from the age of 18 to 60, holding a commission from

⁵⁸ Maria Edgeworth, *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Marilyn Butler and Susan Manly et al. (9 vols., London, 1999), iii, p. 26.

⁵⁹ See *Memoir of Amelia Opie*, ed. C. L. Brightwell (London, 1855), p. 97.

⁶⁰ Anne Plumptre, *A Narrative of a Three Year's Residence in France from 1802 to 1805* (3 vols., London, 1810), i, p.1.

⁶¹ See Gavin Daly, ‘Napoleon's Lost Legions: French Prisoners of War in Britain, 1803-1814’, *History*, 3rd series, 89(2004), 366; John Goldworth Alger, *Napoleon's British Visitors and Captives, 1801-1815* (Westminster, 1904), p. 178; and Grainger, *The Amiens Truce*, pp. 200-2.

his Britannic Majesty' were liable to be arrested.⁶² Bonaparte's officials, however, ignored the limitations of the decree. Thus British male civilians of whatever age and status were put in prison.⁶³ Most women and little children were allowed to leave France later on, although with some difficulties. Maria Edgeworth returned to Dover safely before the outbreak of war, but her brother was rounded up and held for ten years.⁶⁴ Frances Burney was required to stay in France due to her French husband's military career. According to John Goldworth Alger, some women were allowed to visit or to stay with their husbands or fathers in prison during the war.⁶⁵ But generally speaking, travel across the Channel was terminated in the period between 1803 and 1814.

After the fall of Napoleon and the restoration of the Bourbons in 1814, voyages became frequent again. Many upper-class Britons had missed the age of the Grand Tour under the *ancien regime*, and had desired to visit Paris for more than ten years. Frances Shelley (1787-1873), like many other British people, had longed for a trip to Europe since the 1790s and wished to witness the new France, but due to the war against France, her passion for travelling remained constrained.⁶⁶ After the victory of Waterloo in 1815, she felt inclined to exchange her peaceful domestic life for 'a

⁶² Grainger, *The Amiens Truce*, p. 200.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 200. See also Michael Lewis, *Napoleon and his British Captives* (London, 1962), pp. 22-4.

⁶⁴ Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford, 1972), p. 197.

⁶⁵ Alger, *Napoleon's British Visitors and Captives*, pp. 235-43.

⁶⁶ Frances Shelley, *The Diary of Frances Lady Shelley 1787-1817*, ed. Richard Edgcumbe (London, 1912), p. 86.

rambling life', 'which would enlarge my mind, and make me [a] pleasanter companion by the fireside of old age'.⁶⁷ In Calais in June 1815 Frances Shelley wrote, 'Am I really in France?' A vast concourse of Britons had appeared in France.⁶⁸

D. Introduction to the Main Topics of the Thesis

The first two chapters of the thesis will explore British women's roles in eighteenth-century society and investigate those who tried hard to challenge or to correct traditionally-defined femininity and to prove themselves useful in their society. A review of Elizabeth Carter's translation of Epictetus' *Works* in 1758 had noted that, if 'women had the benefit of liberal instructions, if they were inured to study, and accustomed to learned conversation ... if they had the same opportunity of improvement as the men, there can be no doubt but they would be equally capable of reaching any intellectual attainment'.⁶⁹ As I shall argue in the first two chapters, towards the end of the eighteenth century many educated women wanted to lodge a claim to be rational creatures, capable of learning and of being independent. For most British gentlemen, to leave home and go abroad had been taken for granted. As indicated previously, the Grand Tour taken by upper-middle and upper class youth was regarded as a stepping stone in their education since the sixteenth century. For women, instead, to stay at home to be a good wife and daughter was the proper and

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁶⁹ Reviewer in the *Monthly Review*, June 1758, quoted in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, ed. Vivien Jones (London, 1990), p. 174.

natural thing.⁷⁰ Thus, when women had the chance to wander far afield from home and walk outside their usual boundaries, some of them revealed their aspirations: to get rid of conventional restrictions on the female role, to gain independence and to gain wider experience.

I shall put a special focus on Mary Wollstonecraft in Chapter 1. Wollstonecraft was one among the first to resist innate gender differences and insist that women should be educated like men. She argued about her Revolutionary ideals with the leading political figures of the day, and, while not denying the female identity of nurturing and motherhood, she justified women's powers of reason and of being independent. This chapter will also explore Wollstonecraft's experiences of taking pains to be independent and original in the world and her great courage in trying to establish herself in the 'masculine' world in her lifelong journey.

Chapter 2, following the arguments of Chapter 1, discloses that, by studying British females' travel accounts, especially those of Elizabeth Holland (1771–1845), Mary Berry, Mary Shelley and Frances Elizabeth King, no matter whether these women were radicals, liberal thinkers or conservatives, they endeavoured to assert themselves as rational beings, demonstrate that they could take the responsibilities of independence and wished to be respected in society.

⁷⁰ See the works of James Fordyce, Thomas Gisborne, John Gregory and Hannah More. See also Turner, *British Travel Writers*, pp. 138-9.

Part Two and Part Three of the thesis explores different aspects of British female travellers' political commentaries and reflections on the conflict and the questions caused by the French Revolution and wars against France. Although these female travellers witnessed the political turmoil directly on the European Continent, this thesis has no intention to use their accounts to represent and to narrate the Revolution and the Napoleonic wars as such. Rather, this thesis will explore these British women's attitudes towards the international conflict, and how their experience of international conflict helped to shape their own cultural and national outlook at the end of the eighteenth century. After the fall of the Bastille in July 1789, travel became bound up with politics.⁷¹ Surprising numbers of Britons continued to visit France and to experience at first hand the events and the consequences of them. Hence, this thesis will examine forty-five published writings (letters, memoirs and prose written in Revolutionary France), from Mary Wollstonecraft to Mary Shelley, and Martha Russell's and Mary Russell's unpublished diaries, to investigate these women's ideas about the Revolution and their responses to the contemporary chaotic political situation.

From Chapter 3 to Chapter 7, I shall take Burke and Wollstonecraft's debate on the Revolution as the central theme to discuss chronologically the political responses

⁷¹ See T. F. Hill, *Observations on the Politics of France, and their Progress since the last Summer: made in a Journey from Spa to Paris during the autumn of 1791* (London, 1792), p. 1.

in these travel writings. Chapter 3 focuses on the Burke-Wollstonecraft debate. After Edmund Burke published his attack on the revolutionaries in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in November 1790, Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* in the same month to refute Burke's moral and political philosophy and his defence of the historical development of all social orders. She emphasized the rights of all human beings and maintained that Burke's apologia for the *ancien régime* revealed his indifference to the misery of the silent majority in France.⁷² Together with other reformers' works, such as those of Thomas Paine (1737-1809), James Mackintosh (1765-1832) and William Godwin (1756-1836), this triggered more polemical pamphleteering in the 1790s.

Many women who were sympathetic to the Revolution, like Wollstonecraft, wanted to go to France and to observe how the revolutionary changes might bring benefits to human beings. All Wollstonecraft witnessed was, however, a disordered and bloodstained society. Thus, she began to wonder how and why the Revolution had gone wrong. Should she carry on having confidence in it? Was there another way to fulfil Revolutionary ideals in human society? She had been trying to find answers in her journeys. Her subsequent works, *An History and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the Effect It Has Produced in Europe* (1794)

⁷² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, reprinted in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Ontario, 1997), p. 47.

and *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796),⁷³ written during the journey, reveal her abiding concern with the impact of the political changes upon European society. Thereafter, as I shall argue from Chapter 4 to Chapter 7, numerous women travellers, such as Helen Maria Williams, Martha Russell, Mary Russell, Mary Berry, Ann Radcliffe, Charlotte West, Grace Dalrymple Elliott, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire (1757–1806) and some anonymous writers, responded to the Revolution controversy and revealed their ideas on future perfectibility and British political ideology in their writings.

Under the threat of Revolutionary France (1793-1802) and during the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), a popular conservatism and patriotism developed in Britain.⁷⁴ Chapter 8 and Chapter 9 (Part Three) will use the travel journals of the women who went to France during the Amiens Truce (1801-1803) and after the fall of Napoleon in 1814 to analyse the formation of British national identity and nationalism

⁷³ Mary Wollstonecraft, *An History and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the Effect It Has Produced in Europe*, in Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Jane Todd and Marilyn Butler (7 vols., London, 1989), vi; and Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), reprinted in Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and Memoirs of the Author of the 'Rights of Woman'*, ed. Richard Holmes (London, 1987).

⁷⁴ On the subject of popular conservatism and patriotism, see H. T. Dickinson, 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford, 1990), pp. 503-33; and H. T. Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism, 1789-1815', in *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815*, ed. H. T. Dickinson (London, 1989), pp. 103-25. On the British national consciousness during the Revolutionary age, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2nd edn., London, 2005); Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992), 309-29; Clive Emsley, 'Revolution, War and the Nation State: the British and French Experiences 1789-1801', in *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, ed. Mark Philp (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 99-117; and John Dinwiddy, 'England', in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, ed. Otto Dann and John Dinwiddy (London, 1988), pp. 53-70.

in this period. Since travel literature had a large readership, these published female travel writings with a developing national consciousness as one of the themes would further encourage the emergence of national stereotypes in this period.⁷⁵

One of the last travellers to be discussed in this thesis is Mary Shelley, daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, who eloped with Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) to France in 1814 and experienced the consequences of the Revolution. In 1816, she passed through Paris again and composed her response to the recent history of France in *Frankenstein* (1818) in Geneva. Shelley's reflections on the French Revolution conclude the discussion of British women travellers' political ideas in Part Three.

This thesis uses therefore the journals, letters, diaries and memoirs of British women travellers to explain the character of an age: the female character as well as the British political character between 1789 and 1815. By a process of argument, I shall maintain that although most women lacked the opportunity of school education and carried domestic burdens, some tried to prove to the world their independence in, and usefulness to, society, whilst at the same time not rejecting their 'natural' role in the domestic sphere. Although the most well-known political thinkers with Revolutionary ideas were men like Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine, this does not

⁷⁵ This idea can be understood by Benedict Anderson's explanation that print culture (the public sphere) made people think about themselves and to relate themselves to others. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), p. 36.

mean that in this Revolutionary age women did not have any influence and did not speak out about their ideas for future progress. In the end, these educated British women both stimulated and contributed to the formation of British political and cultural identity at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

PART ONE

WOMEN'S TRAVEL WRITINGS AND FEMALE ROLES

CHAPTER 1

MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT, EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY

FEMININITY, AND HER PURSUIT OF LIBERTY AND

EQUALITY

While I live, I am persuaded, I must exert my understanding to procure an independence, and render myself useful. (Wollstonecraft to Joseph Johnson, London, winter 1789/1790)¹

For man and woman, truth, if I understand the meaning of the word, must be the same. (Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*)²

I cannot bear to think of being no more – of losing myself – though existence is often but a painful consciousness of misery; nay, it appears to me impossible that I should cease to exist... (Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*)³

The first part of the thesis will begin with an introduction to traditional female roles in British society and the conventional view of femininity in the eighteenth century, then will demonstrate that these educated women who, though most of them did not defy convention, tried to prove that women could have rational minds and were capable of

¹ Wollstonecraft to Joseph Johnson, London, winter 1789/1790, in Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Jane Todd and Marilyn Butler (7 vols., London, 1989), vi, p. 359.

² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: an Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*, ed. Deidre Shauna Lynch (3rd edn., New York and London, 2009), p. 55.

³ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), reprinted in Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and Memoirs of the Author of the 'Rights of Woman'*, ed. Richard Holmes (London, 1987), p. 112.

being independent and of learning. They challenged the traditional concept of women and revealed their characters in public. Chapter 1, along with the investigation of the social construction of femininity in eighteenth-century Britain, will explore Mary Wollstonecraft's ideal woman and her place within society and the family. Studying the travel experiences of Wollstonecraft, I will develop a case study of her own pursuit of independence and liberty, as well as her quest for domestic affection in her lifelong journey. Her life story discloses not only her personality, but also her own ideal of woman: a creature with not only delicate feelings but an acute and rational mind.

A. British Female Roles and Femininity in Eighteenth-Century Society

The beginning of this chapter will discuss female roles and femininity in the eighteenth-century world. In eighteenth-century Britain, only a limited number of women received a formal school education.⁴ It was by and large a gendered world. According to Roy Porter's *Enlightenment*, men of the eighteenth century were confirmed in their superiority by Scripture, the law, their political rights and other sources of authority, while women were subordinated.⁵ A large share of reason, the

⁴ Evelyn Gordon Bodek has described female education in the eighteenth century in her article, 'Salonières and Bluestockings: Educated Obsolescence and Germinating Feminism', *Feminist Studies*, 3 (1976), 185-99. During the eighteenth century, women's lack of educational opportunities had been one of the important issues discussed in the *Gentleman's Magazine*. See Jean E. Hunter, 'The 18th-Century Englishwoman: According to the Gentleman's Magazine', in *Woman in the Eighteenth Century and Other Essays*, ed. Paul Fritz & Richard Morton (Toronto, 1976), pp. 73-88.

⁵ Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2000), p. 320. The following descriptions about the Enlightenment and gender are indebted to *ibid.*, ch. 14, 'Did the Mind Have a Sex?', pp. 320-38.

essential quality of the Enlightenment, was bestowed on men. The female constitution, anatomically and physiologically, was specially designed for childbearing. They were soft and nurturing, thereby suiting them to matrimony and motherhood. Women were therefore excluded from exercising political rights throughout Britain. Many historians and literary scholars agree that men occupied the public sphere, while women became increasingly restricted to the private sphere of home, and this developed clearly in the period of the eighteenth century.⁶ As stated by the leading jurist, Sir William Blackstone, in *The Laws Respecting Women as they Regard their Natural Rights* (1777), ‘the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of her husband.’⁷ Every wife except a queen regnant was under the legal authority of her husband, and so was her movable property. ‘She can’t let, set, sell, give away, or alienate any thing without her husband’s consent’, Blackstone summarized.⁸

Perhaps the most influential work about human nature and education of the age

⁶ For a general introduction of this subject, see Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Clíona Ó Gallchoir and Penny Warburton, ‘Introduction: Women, Writing and Representation’, in *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, ed. Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Clíona Ó Gallchoir and Penny Warburton (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 1-23; Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington, 2000), ‘Introduction: Women and the Public Sphere in England, 1780-1830’, pp. 1-12. For the discussion of the public and private space, see Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Cambridge, 1989), ch. 6, ‘Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy’, pp. 118-40; Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Cambridge, 1995), ch. 8, ‘Regarding Some “Old Husbands’ Tales”: Public and Private in Feminist History’, pp. 227-76; and John Brewer, ‘This, That and the Other: Public, Social and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries’, in *Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Lesley Sharpe and Dario Castiglione (Exeter, 1995), pp. 1-21.

⁷ Quoted in Porter, *Enlightenment*, p. 321.

⁸ Quoted in Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2nd edn., London, 2005), p. 238.

was Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile* (1762), which not only inherited the long developing doctrine of the gendered world, but also offered a means for British men to emphasize the physical, intellectual, emotional and functional differences between the two sexes with Rousseau's conclusion that woman was born to obey.⁹ As Edward Duffy indicates the influence of *Emile*,

The eighteenth-century English ... thought so highly of the fifth book [the final chapter of *Emile*, which was about Sophie and female education] that they gave its heroine a place in the title of the English translation. To the English reading public, Rousseau's new book was not *Emile* but *Emilius and Sophia*.¹⁰

Linda Colley also stresses that Rousseau's sexual politics were influential in Britain among the conservative moralists such as James Fordyce and Hannah More, even including the radical Mary Wollstonecraft in some ways.¹¹

For most eighteenth-century philosophers, the different biology of men and women directly generated the social role assigned to each sex.¹² Rousseau granted the child the right to discover its own nature. Education enabled a man (Emile) to be a 'natural' man and a citizen in society. Due to her limited physical strength and

⁹ Rousseau's *Emile* generated a high level of response in British periodicals such as the *London Chronicle*, the *Critical Review* and the *Monthly Review* in 1762. For a relative research on Rousseau's reputation in Britain, see Edward Duffy, *Rousseau in England: the Context for Shelley's Critique of the Enlightenment* (Berkeley, 1979), ch. 1, 'Rousseau's English Reputation', pp. 9-31.

¹⁰ Duffy, *Rousseau in England*, p. 17. The first English translation of *Emile* was named *Emilius and Sophia; or a New System of Education* (London, 1762).

¹¹ Colley, *Britons*, p. 240.

¹² Studies about the influence of *Emile* in eighteenth-century British society, the Enlightenment and in eighteenth-century gender conventions, see, for example, Duffy, *Rousseau in England*, pp. 9-31; Porter, *Enlightenment*, ch. 14; Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995), ch. 6; Colley, *Britons*, ch. 6, especially pp. 238-40; and Lyndall Gordon, *Mary Wollstonecraft: a New Genus* (London, 2005), chs. 6 and 7.

capacity of mind, Emile's mate Sophie was a creature relative to him. What she represented was only the quality of feeling and heart: 'If she really had talents, her pretentiousness would degrade them'.¹³ Rousseau further argued, 'Her honour is to be unknown; her glory is the respect of her husband; her joys the happiness of her family.'¹⁴ For Emile, Rousseau designed an education that would turn the boy into a virtuous citizen; for Sophie, the ideal mate, he had designed an education that constructed her as representative only of domestic virtues. His Sophie was to please men. She had some influence within the boundaries of the home, such as to educate her children into patriotic citizens. Thus, for Rousseau and his followers, women's contribution to the welfare of a nation was necessary and crucial, though different from that of men.

In addition, as we can see in the advice manuals of John Gregory and James Fordyce, two of the most popular conservative conduct books in the late eighteenth century, both resembled Rousseau's thoughts on women's nature and education. They both emphasized women's feminine ways of appearance and actions, their domestic virtue and influences within their family, as well as suggesting women should not expose their talents and intelligence in public.¹⁵ As Barbara Taylor points out,

¹³ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, trans. Barbara Foxley (London, 1955), p. 372.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 372.

¹⁵ For the study of Fordyce and other Scottish enlightenment thinkers' idea of female manners and morals, see Barbara Taylor, 'Feminists versus Gallants; Manners and Morals in Enlightenment Britain', *Representations*, 87 (2004), 125-48.

Scottish enlightenment thinkers like Gregory, James Fordyce and his brother David Fordyce wished women to be 'intelligent' without being 'intellectual'; they were against women who displayed their intelligence in the literary public. Moreover, they wished women to be 'self-respecting' yet aware of their 'feminine weakness and natural dependence on men'.¹⁶ All in all, their works revealed a wish of maintaining a male-dominated society.

In Dr. Johnson's English Dictionary, he defined 'feminine' as following:

1. Of the sex that brings young; female; 2. Soft; tender; delicate; 3. Effeminate; emasculated; wanting manliness.¹⁷

And he defined 'masculine' as following:

1. Male; not female; 2. Resembling man; virile; not soft; not effeminate.¹⁸

Dr. Johnson's definition of these two words reveals how eighteenth-century educated British people thought about female and male qualities, which resembled Rousseau's explanation of the characters of his Emile and Sophie as indicated previously. Feminine and masculine attributes should only belong to women and men respectively. Apparently, the word 'feminine' was considered to imply weakness, dependency and uselessness in society, while 'masculine' related to strength, power and authority, thus the former became a word with a negative meaning in the eyes of those women who wanted to be complete and independent persons. As Cora Kaplan

¹⁶ Taylor, 'Feminists versus Gallants', 134.

¹⁷ Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), (2 vols., Beirut, 1978), i, p. 736.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, ii, p. 1209.

argues, 'All feminisms give some ideological hostage to femininities',¹⁹ so those women of the eighteenth century who wanted to get rid of socially constructed gender-difference wished to be less 'feminine' and more 'masculine', to access reason and attain wider public participation.

Lord Chesterfield also separated men from women according to the attributes of masculinity and femininity, reason and soft feelings, and seriousness and lightness.

His letters to his son in 1748 had mentioned:

Women ... are only children of a larger growth; they have an entertaining tattle, and sometimes wit; but for solid, reasoning good sense, I never in my life knew one that had it ... A man of sense only trifles with them, plays with them, humours and flatters them, as he does with a sprightly, forward child; but he neither consults them about, nor trusts them with, serious matters.²⁰

Rousseau and his followers also stressed that the faculty of reason inside women's bodies was not as strong as that of men so that liberty of thought and independence of movement should not be assigned to females. Thus, women were denied the full status of individuals and were clearly generalized as weak, submissive and tender daughters, wives and mothers, and thereby denied individual uniqueness. Furthermore, women were considered to be related to nature and were therefore 'the other' in history, while 'rational' men created human culture and stimulated the civilizing process. Dorinda Outram indicates that 'in spite of the Enlightenment tendency to

¹⁹ Cora Kaplan, 'Wild Nights: Pleasure/Sexuality/Feminism', reprinted in Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, P. 348.

²⁰ Philip Stanhope, *Letters Written by the Late Right Honourable Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to His Son* (2 vols., London, 1774), i, pp. 330-1.

define the “natural” as “the good”, woman’s equation with “nature” did not operate in such way as to give her equality with, or superiority over men’; rather, Outram continues, ‘it operated to place women at one remove from men, to define them as “the other”’.²¹ As Simone de Beauvoir argued in *The Second Sex*, women, far from superior, are ‘the other’, because they are not men. According to de Beauvoir, men have a complete self; they define their value of existence and their identity. However, women have been passive for centuries; they were subject to men; their meaning of existence was defined by men.²² As I shall argue later, it would be wrong to suppose that all women subscribed to the ideology of ‘the other’. Some of them, both conservatives and liberals, questioned the culturally-defined role of women and were unwilling to accept traditional female characteristic. They were themselves, not the other.

In addition, many elite women had pursued privately an intensive process of self-education: they were fluent in many European languages, studied history, poetry, drama, politics and sciences, as well as artistic skills.²³ Dr. Johnson had admitted that in his age more knowledge had been diffused and ‘all our ladies read now’.²⁴ We should therefore not be surprised at reading in Paul Kaufman’s research that women

²¹ Outram, *The Enlightenment*, p. 84.

²² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, ed. & trans. H. M. Parshley (London, 1988).

²³ For women’s self-education, see John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination : English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997), pp. 56-9, 77-9, 194-7; Bodek, ‘Salonières and Bluestockings’, 185-99.

²⁴ The words were recorded on 29 April 1778, in James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. R. W. Chapman, (Oxford, 1980), p. 979.

constituted thirty percent of the patrons at circulating libraries in Britain from 1793 to 1799.²⁵ Kathleen Wilson also stresses that women made up between one-third and one-fifth of the membership at various book clubs.²⁶ Towards the end of the century a remarkable number of women were participating in print culture – a literary public sphere. The *Critical Review* responded to Elizabeth Carter's *Poems on Several Occasions* in 1762 with a tone of anxiety:

There never was perhaps an age wherein the fair sex made so conspicuous a figure with regard to literary accomplishments as in our own. We may all remember the time, when a woman who could *spell* was looked on as an extraordinary phenomenon, and a *reading* and *writing* wife was considered as a miracle; but the case at present is quite otherwise ... The men *retreat*, and the women *advance*. The men prate and dress; the women read and write: it is no wonder, therefore, that they should get the upper hand of us; nor would we be at all surprised, if, in the next age, women should give lectures in the classics, and men employ themselves in knotting and needlework.²⁷

By describing the changing relationship of women and literature, this reviewer marked the stereotypes of gender and gender positions, and exhibited the reviewer's uneasiness at women's 'literary accomplishments' and their advance in social position in the second half of the eighteenth century. Maria Edgeworth also observed in 1795 that, 'Women of literature are much more numerous of late than they were few years ago. They make a class in society, they fill the public eye, and have acquired a degree

²⁵ Paul Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users: Collected Papers in Library History* (London, 1969), pp. 223-4.

²⁶ Quoted in Kathleen Wilson, 'Citizenship, Empire, and Modernity in the English Province, C. 1720-1790', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 1st series, 29(1995), 79.

²⁷ Reviewer in the *Critical Review*, 1762, in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity*, ed. Vivien Jones (London, 1990), p. 175.

of consequence and appropriate character.’²⁸ She emphasized the number and visibility of female writers, who had formed ‘a class in society’ with increasing self-consciousness. Moreover, these writers had been kindly received by the public. Anne K. Mellor points out that, ‘We know of more than 900 female poets, at least 500 female novelists, and numerous other female playwrights, travel writers, historians, philosophers, and political writers who published at least one volume in this period [1780- 1830].’²⁹ Edgeworth’s observation supports Mellor’s argument that many women were active in public sphere and influential in the formation of public opinion for they were not only writers, but were received well and attracted attention from the literary public and literary reviews.³⁰

Most women who will be discussed in this thesis received a domestic education from their parents, governesses, or through their own efforts. According to Wollstonecraft, during the childhood and teenage years of eighteenth-century women, they were constructed as Rousseau’s ‘Sophie’, that is to say, ‘to please, to be useful to us, to make us love and esteem them, to educate us when young, to take care of us when grown up, to advise, to console us, to render our lives easy and agreeable; these are the duties of women at all times, and what they should be taught in their

²⁸ Maria Edgeworth, *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1795), ed. Claire Connolly (London, 1993), p. 7.

²⁹ Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation*, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

infancy.’³¹ It was a process of feminization. Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) was among the first works to argue with Rousseau by asking: ‘Who made man the exclusive judge, if woman partake with him of the gift of reason?’³² She resisted innate gender differences and insisted that women should be treated like men, and women that had *rights* to be educated as rational beings. She called for a rational education for women. ‘I may be accused of arrogance’, she wrote, ‘still I must declare what I firmly believe, that all the writers who have written on the subject of female education and manners from Rousseau to Dr. Gregory, have contributed to render women more artificial, weak characters, than they would otherwise have been; and useless members of society. ... the whole purport of those books ... degrade one half of the human species, and render women pleasing at the expense of every solid virtue.’³³ For her, there was no intellectual difference between the two sexes if they had equal opportunities to be taught as rational creatures, to refine their feelings and cultivate their virtues.³⁴

B. Mary Wollstonecraft and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

‘I must be independent’, Mary Wollstonecraft wrote to her sister Everina in 1787.³⁵

Wollstonecraft grew up in a family descended from gentlemen farmers with a violent

³¹ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 85.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-5.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

³⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft to Everina Wollstonecraft, London, 7 November 1787, in Mary Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Ralph M. Wardle (Ithaca, 1979), p. 165.

and dissolute father, Edward Wollstonecraft, and a submissive mother and six other siblings.³⁶ According to the memoir of Wollstonecraft, written by William Godwin (1756-1836), Wollstonecraft often threw herself between ‘the despot’ – her father, and ‘his victim’ – her mother, in order to protect her mother from the blows of her father.³⁷ Her discovery of the unequal and unreasonable state of man and woman within marriage had thus come from her firsthand experience. This future writer of *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790) and *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* had made up her mind not to follow her mother’s submissive and dependent role at home.³⁸ She decided an intention to be an independent woman with her own means of making a living: a professional writer. ‘I am ... going to be the first of a new genus – I tremble at [the] attempt’, she wrote to Everina.³⁹ For her, following a profession encouraged independence, equality and freedom; only then would it be possible for true family affection to grow with mutual respect.

Wollstonecraft must have known that by her time there had already been some female writers in Britain. In 1753 Dr. Johnson had written that in this age, there was an explosion of writing by women; thus the pen was not only consigned to the hands

³⁶ William Godwin’s *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798), reprinted in Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence*, pp. 205-7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

³⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, reprinted in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Ontario, 1997).

³⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft to Everina Wollstonecraft, London, 7 November 1787, in Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters*, p. 164.

of man; it was 'a generation of Amazons of the pen'.⁴⁰ Wollstonecraft was even more ambitious; she would criticize the condition of the rights of men in Britain and devise a plan for change.

In her *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, Wollstonecraft was among the first to debate politics and the rights of men with Edmund Burke. This topic will be discussed in Chapter 3. Her later treatise *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was a powerful reaction to the social construction of femininity and the inequality between the two sexes. The work called for a revolution in 'female manners',⁴¹ and in education. She cared about the role of women in a civil society, as well as their education, rights and manners, and throughout hundreds of pages she argued with Rousseau that, while born without gender difference, women were made feminine in the flawed process of female education.⁴²

Wollstonecraft maintained that, with proper education, women would learn 'knowledge and virtue';⁴³ otherwise, if a woman did not know anything about 'the moral and civil interest of mankind', how could she be a good citizen as well as

⁴⁰ Dr. Johnson wrote, 'In former times, the pen, like the sword, was considered as consigned by nature to the hands of men ... the revolution years has now produced a generation of Amazons of the pen, who with the spirit of their predecessors have set masculine tyranny at defiance', Samuel Johnson, *The Idler; and, the Adventurer*, ed. W. J. Bate, John M. Bullitt, and L. F. Powell (New Haven, 1963), pp. 457-8.

⁴¹ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 49, 202.

⁴² In the eyes of Wollstonecraft, a false system of education made women rather 'alluring mistresses' than 'affectionate wives' and 'rational mothers'. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

educate her child as a good patriot?⁴⁴ Females were natural mothers, yet they should not be confined to domestic affairs. About the reform of female manners, Wollstonecraft thought independence and liberty were important elements for women to develop their ‘manly virtue’.⁴⁵ For her, manly virtue meant to attain ‘those talents and virtues’ and to exercise that ‘which ennobles the human character’.⁴⁶ As has been explored previously, the ‘feminine’ was viewed negatively by some eighteenth-century women of letters such as Wollstonecraft. She praised the manly characteristics of strength, modesty, sound judgment, rationality and intellect, and tried to persuade the female sex to be masculinized women. Moreover, Wollstonecraft neither agreed that serious subjects like politics were men’s own topic, nor that reasoning and reflecting were men’s own private preserve. Women could be philosophers, theorists, writers and poets like men. As we shall see throughout this thesis, plenty of women participated in political culture and revealed their influence in public.

The nature of the two sexes, according to Wollstonecraft, was unsexed in their infancy, and the feminine qualities of softness, tenderness, dependency, sensibility were culturally constructed in the course of flawed female education, which made

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11. Wollstonecraft indicated that ‘liberty’ is ‘the mother of virtue’. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

pleasing others and making a suitable marriage women's only objects in life.⁴⁷ If the education of the two sexes were the same, Wollstonecraft argued, there would be no gender difference.⁴⁸ She thus demanded more 'JUSTICE' for females,⁴⁹ who should be considered rather as 'women' – a kind of 'subordinate beings' – than 'human creatures'.⁵⁰ As Simone de Beauvoir, the pioneer twentieth-century feminist later claimed, 'one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman'.⁵¹ Women were not born with feminine attributes, but underwent an imposed feminization to make them feminine. With equal rational education, Wollstonecraft pointed out, women might become more 'masculine' and 'respectable' due to their abilities and virtues.⁵² Then they would carry a 'nobler ambition' to render themselves useful in society.⁵³ At the same time, she demanded a revolution not only in female manners, but also in men's manners. With proper education, rational men should not treat women as house slaves and their inferiors; rather, they would change their daily attitudes towards women and regard them as their equal. In this way, all mankind would improve.⁵⁴

In her political writings, the family was placed at the heart of political reform. A harmonious family in which husband and wife had equal rights and were given equal

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 124. Wollstonecraft also wrote, '[e]very thing that they see or hear serves to fix impressions, call forth emotions, and associate ideas, that give a sexual character to the mind.' *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9. Her emphasis.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵¹ Alice Schwarzer, *Simone de Beauvoir Today: Conversations 1972-1982* (London, 1982), p. 24.

⁵² Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 13.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

treatment was the cradle of good, virtuous and patriotic citizens.⁵⁵ In this society, a woman could carry out her maternal as well as civic duties. That men and women lived in an equal and independent state did not contradict family affection nor women's natural role as a mother at home. In her political critique, she accepted the republican ideas of Richard Price, Thomas Paine and Catherine Macaulay, but she went on to stress the happiness and self-determined advancement of each individual. While asserting political progress as a key step toward a utopian world, therefore, Wollstonecraft was concerned with a broader concept of civilization, which included the cultivation of minds as well as intellectual and political improvement. Civilization, according to Wollstonecraft's observation, was 'the cultivation of the understanding, and refinement of the affections'.⁵⁶ In her ideal family, as Chris Jones points out, husband and wife were equal and independent, and held respective duties, because true and refined affections can only subsist among equals.⁵⁷ Thus, family affection was a display of civilized refinement and the female role in a nation was as important as the male in stimulating the process of civilization.

C. Mary Wollstonecraft and Her Pursuit of Liberty and Independence

Wollstonecraft endeavoured to practise her theories as laid out in the *Vindications* in

⁵⁵ See Sylvana Tomaselli, 'The Most Public Sphere of All: the Family', in *Women, Writing and the Public Sphere*, pp. 239-56.

⁵⁶ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 73.

⁵⁷ Chris Jones, 'The *Vindications* and their Political Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge, 2002), p. 46.

real life. Independence and liberty were necessities in her life. As she wrote to Joseph Johnson in 1787, 'In the course of near nine-and-twenty years, I have gathered some experience, and felt many *severe* disappointments - and what is the amount?' She cried out: 'I long for a little peace and *independence*! Every obligation we receive from our fellow-creatures is a new shackle, takes from our native freedom, and debases the mind, makes us mere earthworms - I am not fond of groveling!'⁵⁸ She wanted to be a more independent and useful woman: 'While I live, I am persuaded, I must exert my understanding to procure an independence, and render myself useful.'⁵⁹

In 1795 she wrote again, she was '[f]atigued during my youth by the most arduous struggles, not only to obtain independence, but to render my self useful'.⁶⁰

Wollstonecraft was restlessly in search of a Golden Age, a perfect form of existence in human society. While in England she had longed for more liberty and independence, but the political reality of Britain and its social conventions disappointed her. After the fall of the Bastille, what happened in France seemed to bring to fruition the social and political theories she had expected. She thus was eager to witness the Revolution and to pursue a new life in a freer state. As she wrote to her sister, 'You know I was not born to tread in the beaten track - the peculiar bent of my nature pushes me on'.⁶¹

⁵⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft to Joseph Johnson, Henley, 13 Sep 1787, in Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, vi, p. 354.

⁵⁹ Wollstonecraft to Joseph Johnson, London, winter 1789/1790, in *ibid.*, p. 359.

⁶⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft to Gilbert Imlay, Paris, 9 January 1795, in Mary Wollstonecraft, *Mary Wollstonecraft: Letters to Imlay*, ed. C. Kegan Paul (London, 1879), p. 88.

⁶¹ Mary Wollstonecraft to Everina Wollstonecraft, London, 7 November 1787, in Wollstonecraft,

Towards the end of 1792, during the Terror, when most Britons like Wordsworth hurried along the road home in fear of the oncoming war, Wollstonecraft travelled alone on her way to Paris.

In her short life, Wollstonecraft had always been on the move, pursuing her goal in life.⁶² Due to her family's financial problems, she lived in seven different places before settling in Newington Green in 1784. In 1785 she travelled to Portugal to comfort her dying friend Fanny Blood, then she went to Ireland as a governess for a year in 1786. In 1787 she returned to London, deciding to be a professional writer. In 1792 she sailed to Paris and resided there for six months, then she moved to Neuilly for several months, and later to Le Havre, and at last travelled back to London in the spring of 1795. But before long she started another journey to Sweden, Norway and Denmark. She was a good traveller and enjoyed adventure. She took pains to be independent and original in the world, and looked for an ideal form of existence in different societies. Personally, she also expected to construct a family on a basis of affectionate and rational love. Yet, the reality of the world often drew her into melancholy and a bitterly disappointed state of mind. Thus, she often became depressed when approaching the end of a journey. In her private letters, she sometimes appeared not as strong as she expected women to be according to the

Collected Letters, p.165.

⁶² The following short biography is of Wollstonecraft is indebted to Mary Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters*, Wollstonecraft, *Letters to Imlay*, Godwin, *Memoirs*, and Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (2nd edn., London, 1992).

Rights of Woman, but she revealed her huge efforts in trying to establish herself in the 'masculine' world. As Virginia Woolf commented, it was not 'grace' or 'charm', but 'energy', 'courage' and 'power' that were necessary qualities for her as an independent woman.⁶³

In the summer of 1795 she went to Scandinavia for four months as Gilbert Imlay's 'wife', along with her daughter Fanny and a maid, to sort out Imlay's business troubles and her own emotional problems.⁶⁴ Imlay (175-1828) was the American entrepreneur whom she met in Paris in the early 1793 and fell in love with. He was an intelligent and handsome man, 'a most natural and unaffected creature', he criticized the corruption of old Europe and revealed his zeal for life in the American wilderness with his own farmhouse and family.⁶⁵ All these were attractive to Wollstonecraft. Due to her childhood experience of having to protect her submissive mother from the blows of her despotic, drunken father, she had longed for a harmonious family life based on affection, respect and commonality of interest.⁶⁶ By the end of the summer of 1793 she was pregnant. She wrote to Imlay in 1794 in Paris,

[L]et me, in the sincerity of my heart, assure you, there is nothing I

⁶³ Virginia Woolf, *The Second Common Reader*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London, 2003),

⁶⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft and Gilbert Imlay went through no marriage ceremony, but Wollstonecraft registered herself with the American ambassador under the name Imlay. Moreover, according to the editor of Wollstonecraft's letters, on 19 May 1795, Imlay 'executed a document empowering "Mary Imlay my best friend and wife" to act as his agent in "all my affairs and business which I had placed in the hands of Mr. Elias Backman, negotiant, Gottenburg, or in those of Messrs Myburg and Co., Copenhagen", to collect any sum awarded him in a suit against Peter Ellisson for violation of trust (Abinger MSS)', Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters*, p. 290.

⁶⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft's description in a letter. Quoted in Tomalin, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, p. 185.

⁶⁶ See Godwin, *Memoirs*, pp. 205-7.

would not suffer to make you happy. My own happiness wholly depends on you; and, knowing you, when my reason is not clouded, I look forward to a rational prospect of as much felicity as the earth affords ...⁶⁷

Her letters written during this love affair displayed her efforts to maintain her judgment based on reason, but her emotions won her over again and again. Imlay's progressive coldness towards her and then his infidelity made her life turbulent. Despite her frequent letters, he was indifferent to her and showed no willingness to live with her and their then-unborn baby. Their daughter Fanny was born on 14 May 1794. In the daytime, Wollstonecraft's daughter and her writing of *An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* absorbed her time. After her pregnancy with Fanny, the little creature gave her some happiness, and whenever talking about Fanny, she became spirited. But when left to herself alone in the nighttime, she grew gloomy and felt her happiness was all a fantasy.

Moreover, though endeavouring to be independent, Wollstonecraft sometimes felt fatigued at the effort of nurturing and raising her daughter alone in the extremely cold winter of 1794-1795 and with limited means.⁶⁸ In Paris, she met a German lady

⁶⁷ Wollstonecraft to Imlay, Paris, January 1794, in Wollstonecraft, *Letters to Imlay*, p. 31. Falling in love with Imlay, 'Her confidence was entire; her love was unbounded', Godwin wrote, 'Now, for the first time in her life, she gave a loose to all the sensibilities of her nature'. Godwin, *Memoirs*, p. 243.

⁶⁸ Many journals have described this extraordinarily cold winter 1794-1795. During this time, the price of food, firewood and turf was very high. According to the record in '[Meteorology at Bracknell - Historic Weather Events](http://www.wirksworth.org.uk/A14WEATH.htm)', 'The winter of 1794/95 was exceptionally severe, with the very cold conditions setting in on Christmas Eve 1794. ... The cold was most intense during January, which resulted in the coldest January in the instrumental era (as assessed by CET [the Central England Temperature] measure/series begins 1659). The February value of 0.8degC was 3.0C below the long-term mean. ... On the 25th January, an extreme temperature of (minus) 21 degC was recorded at an unspecified location in England', in 'Weather 1600- 1900', *Wirksworth Parish Records 1600-1900*, <http://www.wirksworth.org.uk/A14WEATH.htm>.

who had a daughter about the age of Fanny. She wrote to Imlay, 'though they are but just above poverty, I envy them.'⁶⁹ This woman, like her, was an affectionate mother, even though fatigued. Yet, 'she [this German woman] has an affectionate husband in her turn to render her care light, and to share her pleasure.'⁷⁰ This was the family affection which she had expected. What she expected had never been romantic love, but harmonious domestic life with mutual respect and respectively independent man and woman as she had stressed in the *Rights of Woman*. She therefore wrote to Imlay: 'I do not want to be loved like a goddess, but I wish to be necessary to you.'⁷¹ But Imlay did not respond to her need. Although she had wished Imlay to return to Paris and to realize her domestic dream, she finally returned to London in April 1795 and there swallowed an overdose of laudanum. Yet she survived.

Imlay's shipping business in Norway had run into difficulties in 1795. He wanted to distract Wollstonecraft's attention from their relationship and thus persuaded her to travel to Norway as his agent to sort out business affairs for him.⁷² For an abandoned mistress, who had just recovered from a suicide attempt, accompanied by little Fanny, this task was demanding, not to mention how tough it would be to journey to remote and unfamiliar destinations in the cold north-eastern

⁶⁹ Wollstonecraft to Imlay, Paris, 29 December 1794, in Wollstonecraft, *Letters to Imlay*, p. 83.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁷¹ Wollstonecraft to Imlay, Paris, 2 January 1794, in *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷² Wollstonecraft to Imlay, London, 22 May 1795, in Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters*, pp. 287-8; Wollstonecraft to Imlay, London, 27 May 1795, in *ibid.*, pp. 288-9; Wollstonecraft to Imlay, Hull, 10 June 1795, in *ibid.*, pp. 289-90.

winds. Yet Wollstonecraft agreed and left within a week. We can explain Wollstonecraft's personality in several ways here: we might think that she was emotionally dependent on Imlay because she followed his suggestion and took on his mission immediately, but she also revealed her courage, energy and strong will in accomplishing such a tough job, at the same time as being the mother of a little daughter. Eventually her mission was accomplished, during which period a successful piece of travel literature, *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, was written. During this trip, despite her bitter personal experience with Imlay, her self-representation in *A Short Residence* trembled in the balance between unquenched hope for the future and sound observation of the northerly countries. While composing this travel account, she sent series of painful letters to Imlay privately. Apparently Wollstonecraft endeavoured to represent herself as a woman poised between sense and sensibility in the literary public.

Although it was a business trip requested by Imlay, she did not present such details in *A Short Residence*. As Mary A. Favret indicates, Wollstonecraft rewrote her travel as a form of escape from all the constraints of the world, wandering freely to the wild and remote north, and in a melancholy tone owing to her hopeless love.⁷³ In the process of exploring new territory, Wollstonecraft not only enjoyed strange

⁷³ For Wollstonecraft's flights of fancy in Scandinavian journey, see Mary A. Favret, 'Letters Written During a Short Resident in Sweden, Norway and Denmark: Travelling with Mary Wollstonecraft', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, pp. 209-27.

landscapes, but disclosed a more intimate self than in her previous works: she did not speak 'on behalf of the human species' like her two *Vindications*,⁷⁴ instead, she used 'the first person' to talk of herself.⁷⁵ As she put it, '[a] person has a right, I have sometimes thought, when amused by a witty or interesting egoist, to talk of himself when he can win on our attention by acquiring our affection.'⁷⁶ In the opening pages, she was confined on board 'weary of expectation' for a boat to 'emancipate' her.⁷⁷ Her attention was directed to the light-house and 'every cloud ... on the horizon hailed as a liberator', until approaching nearer, 'like most of the prospects sketched by hope, it dissolved under the eye into disappointment.'⁷⁸ This can be read as an expression of her personal experiences in France. Politically, she went to Paris with enthusiasm for the Revolution, but soon felt disappointed at the violence of the populace. Emotionally, Imlay almost reached her idealized mate in the beginning, but he turned out to be a disaster for her life. This Scandinavian journey let her breathe fresh air and pulled her out of depression. Once she was liberated and sent ashore, the narrator demonstrated her free movement physically and mentally with a new expectation of happiness as well as for the progress of human civilization.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 39.

⁷⁵ Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence*, Advertisement, p. 62.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁷⁹ For example, Wollstonecraft wrote, 'I forgot the horrors I had witnessed in France, which had cast a gloom over all nature, and suffering the enthusiasm of my character, damped by the tears of disappointed affection, to be lighted up afresh, care took wing while simple fellow feeling expanded my heart', in *ibid.*, p. 68.

Reaching a cascade, the roaring of the falls made her feel that her life was like the impetuous dashing of the rebounding torrent from the dark cavities. She asked herself: 'Why I was chained to life and its misery?'⁸⁰ 'It seemed as impossible to stop the current of my thought',⁸¹ yet, the narrator re-claimed her soul's dignity in powerful tones: 'I stretched out my hand to eternity, bounding over the dark speck of life to come.'⁸² Her intense emotion was heightened by the physical landscapes which she saw. Surrounded by such breathtakingly beautiful scenery, she confessed that 'for years I have endeavoured to calm an impetuous tide - labouring to make my feelings take an orderly course. - it was striving against the stream. - I must love and admire with warmth, or I sink into sadness.'⁸³ Though she suffered from frequent depression, she yet strongly refused to be nobody or to cease to exist as though simply a passing dust.⁸⁴

It seems that in Wollstonecraft's inner voice she did not want to sever herself from the world: 'the future improvement of the world' had been her favourite subject of contemplation, but she felt the world had left her and she could not find a home that belonged to her and her illegitimate daughter.⁸⁵ In Tonsberg, Wollstonecraft

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-3.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁸⁴ As Wollstonecraft wrote: 'How fallacious! yet, without hope, what is to sustain life, but the fear of annihilation – the only thing of which I have ever felt a dread – I cannot bear to think of being no more – of losing myself – though existence is often but a painful consciousness of misery; nay, it appears to me impossible that I should cease to exist', *ibid.*, p. 112.

⁸⁵ Wollstonecraft wrote after arriving at Itzehoe: 'I was weary of travelling four or five hours, never

wrote:

I feel more than a mother's fondness and anxiety, when I reflect on the dependent and oppressed state of her sex. I dread lest she should be forced to sacrifice her heart to her principles, or her principles to her heart. With trembling hand I shall cultivate sensibility, and cherish delicacy of sentiment, lest, whilst I lend fresh blushes to the rose, I sharpen the thorns that will wound the breast I would fain guard- I dread to unfold her mind, lest it should render her unfit for the world she is to inhabit- Hapless woman! What a fate is thine!⁸⁶

She worried about Fanny's future. England was not an ideal place for women, in her opinion. Before she journeyed to Scandinavia, she had thought of bringing up her child in France, because she found things better for women in France. In February 1795, in a letter to Imlay from Paris, she resisted the idea of returning to England: 'Why is it so necessary that I should return? – brought up here, my girl will be freer.'⁸⁷ Expecting Imlay to join them, she had formed 'some plans of usefulness', but these plans had vanished with her hope of happiness due to Imlay's unwillingness to join them.⁸⁸ When she attempted to drown herself in the Thames in November 1795, she left a note to Imlay and implored him to send Fanny and her maid to France.⁸⁹ After she was rescued, but before she fell in love with William Godwin, she had planned to take up residence in France with her daughter.⁹⁰ As Claire Tomalin

meeting a carriage, and scarcely a peasant – and then to stop at such wretched huts, as I had seen in Sweden, was surely sufficient to chill any heart, awake to sympathy, and throw a gloom over my favourite subject of contemplation, the future improvement of the world', in *ibid.*, p. 187.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁸⁷ Wollstonecraft to Imlay, Paris, 19 February 1795, in Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters*, p. 280.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

⁸⁹ Wollstonecraft to Imlay, London, November 1795, in Wollstonecraft, *Letters to Imlay*, pp. 185-6.

⁹⁰ Wollstonecraft wrote: 'I still think of settling in France, because I wish to leave my little Girl there', Mary Wollstonecraft to Hamilton Rowan, London, 26 January 1796, in Wollstonecraft, *Collected*

has explained, Wollstonecraft felt that there was more mental freedom even under the tyrannies of the continent than under the relatively liberal government of Britain.⁹¹ For Wollstonecraft, as Burney revealed in *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties* (1814),⁹² (which topic will be explored in Chapter 9) there was no support and comfort for females in British society. Wollstonecraft had been disappointed at the established social order in Britain. While many British believed British society was the only place that respected liberty in the late 1790s, living within such a society, it seems that Wollstonecraft felt like Burney's 'female wanderer', a helpless woman without respect, freedom or a place of relief.

A trip which began with an anticipation of being emancipated from constraints, became in the later part of journey a dread of her solitary existence and her totally free spirit: 'I was destined to wander alone'.⁹³ Apparently, according to the tone of Wollstonecraft's letters to Imlay, during her journey, the letters she received from Imlay were few and cold.⁹⁴ She became weary of travelling freely, and this freedom of movement began to give her a sense of aimlessness.⁹⁵ Indeed, she enjoyed

Letters, pp. 328-9.

⁹¹ Tomalin, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, pp. 217-18.

⁹² After being detained almost ten years in France, Frances Burney published her fourth and last novel, *The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties*, in 1814. Burney challenged the sense of national superiority to the French in British society by narrating a disguised English woman, whose nationality, religion and rank were unknown, escaping to England from the Terror of France. The heroine enjoyed no more liberty and respect than she had in France.

⁹³ Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence*, p. 135.

⁹⁴ In fact, Imlay had already lived with an actress during Wollstonecraft's business trip in Scandinavia. Tomalin, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, p. 232.

⁹⁵ She wrote in the last letter of *A Short Residence* that 'I do not feel inclined to ramble any further this year; nay, I am weary of changing the scene My spirit of observation seems to be fled', in

rambling through the sublime mountains, racing torrents and dark deep night; only during this time could she express her abundant feelings and violent emotions freely and let the divine nature absorb her emotions. Nevertheless, endless travelling exhausted her. The desire for home was roused in her mind again. It became apparent that her travel could not bring her a feeling of calm and peace, which had been one of her aims for the tour. She longed to be independent and original, but not a solitary wanderer in the world. In her private letters written to Imlay, she wrote: 'I am weary of travelling, yet seem to have no home- no resting place to look to. I am strangely cast off.'⁹⁶ Neither had England provided an ideal environment for her to live, nor had her lover been willing to set up an affectionate home with her. She was not content with the political and social practice of England for women, especially for an illegitimate daughter like Fanny. But she saw no hope of reform in this country. In her day-to-day life, she realized that Imlay had no intention to create a harmonious home with her.

Towards the end of her Scandinavian travels, depression and sorrow finally wore down Wollstonecraft once more. After returning to London in October 1795, Imlay having deserted her, she tried to commit suicide. But she was rescued again. Three years previously, this author of the *Rights of Woman* cried out 'I do not wish

Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence*, p. 197.

⁹⁶ Wollstonecraft to Imlay, Copenhagen, 6 September 1795, in Wollstonecraft, *Letters to Imlay*, p. 174.

them [women] to have power over men; but over themselves',⁹⁷ and criticized women's enslavement by the 'powerful spell' of love.⁹⁸ Now, experiencing it at first hand, she painfully understood how difficult it was to be a perfect free and independent person in real life. Wollstonecraft had been struggling with affection and reason. As early as 1792 she had written to her friend, Joseph Johnson, the publisher, that, 'I am a mere animal, and instinctive emotions too often silence the suggestions of reason. ... I am a strange compound of weakness and resolution! However, if I must suffer, I will endeavour to suffer in silence. There is certainly a great defect in my mind – my wayward heart creates its own misery'.⁹⁹ She knew too clearly what she should do in her rational mind, but she could scarcely resist the tide of her emotional feelings. As Virginia Woolf explained, Wollstonecraft was a woman at once 'so resolute' and 'so dreamy', 'so sensual' and 'so intelligent'.¹⁰⁰ She always wanted to find out the best form of society, questioned the nature of life as well as human beings and fought against all conventions. Yet she was far from a stubborn 'cold-blooded theorist', according to Woolf.¹⁰¹ Experiences of life, Woolf wrote, forced Wollstonecraft to 'model them [her theories] afresh'.¹⁰² She knew how hard it was to be her ideal woman – emotionally independent and rational woman with

⁹⁷ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 67.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁹⁹ Wollstonecraft to Joseph Johnson, London, late 1792, in Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters*, pp. 220-1.

¹⁰⁰ Woolf, *The Second Common Reader*, p. 159.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 159.

constrained feelings – in the *Rights of Woman*. In spite of the fact that she sometimes felt frustrated, she had never gave up finding theories in life and in human society.

After Wollstonecraft was rescued from her second suicide attempt, Imlay continually asserted that he would do all in his power to contribute to her comfort, but by this he only meant pecuniary assistance. This kindness, for her who looked for true affection, was another torment: ‘I never wanted but your heart – That gone, you have nothing more to give’.¹⁰³ Days later, she wrote, ‘I have been hurt by indirect inquiries, which appear to me not to be dictated by any tenderness to me. – you ask “If I am well or tranquil” – they who think me so, must want a heart to estimate my feelings by.’¹⁰⁴ In her last few letters to Imlay, she wrote in a calm and rational tone, and, finally, she determined to give him up and part with him in peace.¹⁰⁵ As Tomalin comments on Wollstonecraft’s letters to Imlay from 1793 to 1795,

The most important and affecting aspect of the letters is their picture of a woman refusing to accept that she is ‘ruined’, a resourceless victim of seduction and abandonment; she goes down into the depths of misery again and again, but repeatedly determines to be rational and independent, to learn to cope with her situation both emotionally and financially and to give up her lover, in the end, without bitterness or demands. It was not easy for her, jealous, passionate, agonized for her child There is something heroic in her final words to Imlay: ‘I part with you in peace.’¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Wollstonecraft to Imlay, London, November 1795, in Wollstonecraft, *Letters to Imlay*, p. 188.

¹⁰⁴ Wollstonecraft to Imlay, London, November 1795, in *ibid.*, p. 191.

¹⁰⁵ In her last letter to Imlay, she wrote ‘I part with you in peace’ as the very last words. Wollstonecraft to Imlay, London, December 1795, in *ibid.*, p. 207.

¹⁰⁶ Claire Tomalin, ‘A Fallen Woman: Reappraisal of *Letters to Imlay* by Mary Wollstonecraft’, in Claire Tomalin, *Several Strangers: Writing from Three Decades* (London, 2000), pp. 21-2.

It can be read as a beautiful comment on her life as well. The most important thing is, no matter how gloomy she felt, she had endeavoured to prove to the world that she was an independent and capable woman.

Nevertheless, Godwin's publication of *Memoirs of the Author of a Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798) and her *Posthumous Works of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1798) containing, among others, *Letters to Imlay* somehow destroyed the public image Wollstonecraft painfully constructed. Godwin's plain-speaking about Wollstonecraft's love affairs, pregnancies and suicide attempts in the *Memoirs* stressed the fervent emotion of her life. Moreover, Wollstonecraft's private letters to Imlay were often written in a turbulent state of mind. Readers tended to regard her as a sensual woman with a disordered mental state as a first impression and to forget the heroic side of her personality in repeatedly determining to be an independent and rational person. In the nineteenth century, as a result, she became an image of the 'sexual' in the reaction to Godwin's publication.¹⁰⁷ In fact, as argued above, Wollstonecraft restrained her desperate anger and sadness in the private life, and managed to display optimistic expectation and acute observations in front of her literary public. She had been struggling between practice and ideal theories and trying to realize the female role she expected despite the disapproval of social convention

¹⁰⁷ For the discussion of Wollstonecraft's reputation after Godwin's publication of *Memoirs*, see Tomalin, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, pp. 284-314. Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (London, 1988), pp. 2-4.

and her personal frustration. Yet she knew when it was time to adjust her theories in order to fit humanity and human need. All these reveal an energetic woman's willpower and independent thinking.

Mary Wollstonecraft spent her whole life on the move, looking for utopia; nevertheless, the fundamental quest of her heart had been for a just and affectionate place for her and her daughter. As with her theory that family affection was a stepping stone to the progress of human society, in her real life, as well, only when she constructed a harmonious family in which wife and husband had equal rights and reciprocal duties did her desire for happiness begin to be fulfilled. Moreover, Wollstonecraft denied the cultural assumptions about women in her times. In her lifelong journeys and writings, she endeavoured to be an individual woman and professional writer and to prove herself useful in the world by advancing ideas concerning the progress of human society and civilization and the proper way to reach the ideal form of society. She wanted to assert that 'woman [partakes] with him [man] of the gift of reason' and '[f]or man and woman, truth, if I understand the meaning of the word, must be the same'.¹⁰⁸ It was, therefore, her expectation that she could be 'the first of a new genus'¹⁰⁹: to voice her independence, sound understanding and strong personality. And such was her hope for the female sex as well.

¹⁰⁸ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 7, 55.

¹⁰⁹ Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters*, p. 164.

CHAPTER 2

CHALLENGING FEMALE ROLES AND FEMININITY

In the last chapter we have seen Wollstonecraft's ideas of women and her personal experiences of trying to be independent and useful in society. In this chapter I shall explore some British women travellers' actions to exemplify their desire to be recognized as equally rational and independent creatures as men. The art of travelling, as Mary Wollstonecraft remarked, 'is [an] ... art of thinking'.¹ These women were not only seeking to witness their readings of the world and to confirm and correct what they had learned, but to ask themselves why they were travelling and how their life should be. In the texts, they wanted to pursue improvement of all kinds and to prove that they deserved liberty and independence and were able to contribute to their society. No matter whether they were radicals, liberal thinkers or conservatives, they endeavoured to assert themselves as rational and useful in society. Many of their actions and writings, therefore, challenge these prevailing stereotypes relating to femininity, such as weakness, passivity and domesticity.

As we shall see, in the course of the eighteenth century, the more women read Enlightenment works, the more they felt that they could do something else besides being good wives and mothers at home. They wanted to be called 'rational' so that

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Analytical Review*, vii, 1790, in Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Jane Todd and Marilyn Butler (7 vols., London, 1989), vii, p. 277.

they might be accepted as capable of shouldering the responsibilities of freedom and independence, and could be useful in society and be esteemed. These women's writings and actions corresponded to Wollstonecraft's stress, as explored in the previous chapter, that the femininity of women was culturally-defined, not women's nature. Women could feel and think as men did, they argued. Seeking self-fulfilment, travel became a good way to open their minds and bring them the cultural shock of the outside world, and it was also an excellent way to live as an independent woman with freedom of mind and of movement.

Wollstonecraft reminded her sex that, when undertaking a journey, they should not visit foreign lands aimlessly and pay too much attention to their dress.² In order to avoid being an idle traveller who 'gives birth to scandal, and to the observation of little incidents which narrows the mind', 'the keeping of a journal' is the best way to inspire useful enquiries that would not otherwise have been thought of.³ Travel, for Wollstonecraft, therefore, was an art of thinking, a mental and spiritual quest. Many women appeared to have agreed with her. During this inner quest, they tasted the fruits of greater independence, liberty and sharpened understanding.

A. Improvement

² Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: an Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*, ed. Deidre Shauna Lynch (3rd edn., New York and London, 2009), p. 65.

³ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), reprinted in Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and Memoirs of the Author of 'the Rights of Woman'*, ed. Richard Holmes (London, 1987), p. 79.

Laurence Sterne gave his sermon on 'the Prodigal Son' in 1765 and talked about the worth of adventure:

the chief of which are - to learn languages, the laws and customs, and understand the governments and interest of other nations, to acquire an urbanity and confidence of behaviour, and fit the mind more easily for conversation and discourse ...; and by showing us new objects, or old ones in new lights, to reform our judgments ...⁴

Travel was the best route to personal enlightenment and had carried an educational purpose in the tradition of the Grand Tour. For women travellers as well, it provided a good chance to refine their minds. With their broadened minds and extensive knowledge about the world and the self, they would have better equipment to achieve the goals of their lives. Lady Elizabeth Holland is an excellent example of this phenomenon. Travelling abroad for her not only meant escape from her previous melancholy life, but also the ability to pursue greater independence, better education and wider experience. Aged fifteen, Lady Elizabeth (née Vassall, 1771-1845) married in 1786 Sir Godfrey Webster, twenty-four years her senior.⁵ The couple was ill matched. Elizabeth became tired of her husband's indifference towards her taste, his gloominess, his disposition, his violence of temper and his fits of depression.⁶ She

⁴ Quoted in William Edward Mead, *The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (Boston, 1914), p. 386.

⁵ Elizabeth was the only daughter of Richard Vassall, of Jamaica. Godfrey was fourth baronet of Battle Abbey, Sussex. See The Earl of Ilchester, 'Introduction', in Elizabeth Holland, *The Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland, 1791-1811*, ed. The Earl of Ilchester, (2 vols., London, 1908), i, pp. ix-x. Elizabeth was divorced from Sir Godfrey Webster and married Henry Richard Fox, 3rd Lord Holland in 1797. See *ibid.*, pp. xv-xvi.

⁶ For example, Elizabeth wrote: 'I am always accompanied by one whose impetuosity compels me to hasten from objects I would willingly contemplate, and whose violence of temper throws me into agitations that prevent me distinguishing the objects when they are before me.' *Ibid.*, p.38. See also *ibid.*, p. 6.

was a woman with an active and buoyant spirit. Like most women of her time, Elizabeth lacked any systematic education. Everything she learnt was due to her own exertions: she followed her bent and absorbed all forms of knowledge by any method.⁷ As she wrote in her later years: 'Happily for me I devoured books, and a desire for information became my ruling passion'.⁸ She indulged herself in reading all kinds of books and acquiring new knowledge including the Greek and Roman classics, the works of Enlightenment philosophers like Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Gibbon, and eighteenth-century novels by the authors like Henry Fielding and Godwin.⁹ With her increasing knowledge whether in books or of the world, she came to think of herself as a victim of marriage and longed for liberty.¹⁰ Her attitudes corresponded to what Wollstonecraft had expected the female sex to do in the *Rights of Woman*: that woman should not be Rousseau's docile and obedient Sophie and view marriage and pleasing her husband as the only goals of her life. Elizabeth desired to see more of the world and to wander further afield rather than staying in her irksome home with Sir Godfrey and being a subservient wife.¹¹

Although Sir Godfrey preferred a residence in England¹² - neither the art of Europe nor the discomfort of long journey attracted him - they had embarked on

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, i, p. 5, 7, 130, 173, 192, 199, 213, 215-6; ii, p. 24, 37, 41, 61.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, i, p. 38, 53-4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38, 53-4.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

travel on the Continent from the summer of 1791. It was Elizabeth's first visit to Europe. Thereafter, she spent most of her time travelling abroad. After a stay in Paris, they journeyed through Switzerland to Nice, where she joined the circle of the Duchess of Devonshire. In her *Journal of Elizabeth Lady Holland*, Elizabeth seldom dealt with her relations with Sir Godfrey and her references to him in her *Journal* revealed feelings of dislike. She usually wrote in the first person singular - plural only when she was grouped with friends. When she mentioned Sir Godfrey, she chose the word 'one' or 'the man' to as a substitute for his name.¹³

She enjoyed 'tranquil pleasure' in the morning or evening by herself. The sound of sea waves filled her with delightful and melancholy reminiscence. The fragrance of flowers and the air of southern Europe soothed her mind and roused a sensation of ecstatic rapture in her.¹⁴ But she also bemoaned her unhappy life from time to time. 'But ah me! What can please or cheer one who has no hope of happiness in life', and she continued, 'Solitude and amusement from external objects is all I hope for: home

¹³ She wrote, for example, 'As I had experienced very cruel usage from the unequal and oft times frantic temper of the man to whom I had the calamity to be united', *ibid.*, p.6; 'I am always accompanied by one whose impetuosity compels me to hasten from objects I would willingly contemplate', *ibid.*, p.38. Emphasis added.

¹⁴ For example, she wrote: 'I walked upon the terrace before my window and enjoyed the beauty of the night; the moon shone bright, which added to the lulling sound of the waves filled me with every pleasing and melancholy recollection. Tho' separated by land and sea from some objects too dearly cherished, yet I was tranquil', *ibid.*, p.19. And 'I never in my life experienced the degree of happiness enjoyed: it was the gratification of mind and sense. The weather was delicious, truly Italian, the night serene, with just enough air to waft the fragrance of the orange flowers then in blossom. Through the leaves of the trees we caught glimpse of the trembling moonbeams on the glassy surface of the bay; all objects conspired to soothe my mind and the sensations I felt were those of ecstatic rapture. I was so happy that when I reached my bedroom, I dismissed my maid, and sat up the whole night looking from my window upon the sea', *ibid.*, p. 26.

is the abyss of misery! I am but as a zero in society, attached to none, belong to none I esteem.’¹⁵ For Elizabeth, the domestic home was a miserable abyss that brought her no hope and cheer. She needed to keep travelling abroad to maintain her solitude. Only in doing so, could she reach a state of happiness with a tranquil mind.

Sir Godfrey sometimes accompanied Elizabeth abroad, and sometimes stayed in England. While the two were in Rome visiting the ancient sites, she wrote, the present reigning complaint of her husband was ‘the being from home’ compared with her ‘determined love for being abroad’.¹⁶ Elizabeth largely widened her world through travelling, and through it she was provided with liberty, experience and company. Then she found a true companion, Henry Richard Fox, 3rd Lord Holland, also a lover of foreign travel and European culture. She divorced Sir Godfrey in 1797 and married Lord Holland, with whom she already had an illegitimate son born in 1796.¹⁷ Her close friend Lady Bessborough attended the ceremony and recounted that she had never seen creatures so happy: ‘Such perfect happiness as theirs scarcely ever was instanc’d before’.¹⁸ It was from this moment that Lady Elizabeth Holland was able to get rid of her memories of an unhappy home and miserable life with her previous husband. A new life had just begun.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁷ See The Earl of Ilchester, ‘Introduction’, in *ibid.*, pp. xv-xvi.

¹⁸ Lady Bessborough to Lord G. Leveson Gower, 9 July 1797, quoted in Leslie Mitchell, *Holland House* (London, 1980), p. 19.

For her, foreign travel was a commencement of self-contemplation: 'I never in my life experienced the degree of happiness enjoyed: it was the gratification of mind and sense', she wrote.¹⁹ European art cultivated her senses, and the picturesque landscape soothed her mind. In her first marriage, under the 'very cruel usage' and 'oft times frantic temper' of her husband, Sir Godfrey Webster, she used to lament her fate and feel depressed at home.²⁰ After she took her journey on the Continent in 1791, the boundless world promised her unlimited possibilities. The experience and knowledge she acquired provided her with greater confidence and consciousness of herself and caused her to dare to satisfy her inner desire of having a greater life.²¹ Now in June 1793, her husband could no longer reign over her: 'Much as I endure now, yet it is infinitely more bearable than formerly', she continued, 'experience and a better knowledge of the world makes me laugh at menaces that used to terrify me out of my senses'.²² Thus, she described how 'a revolution has happened in my whole system; my opinions are more formed, and tho' I am conscious they retain still a portion of absurdity, yet I have adopted some that will be useful.'²³

In the later stages of her life, she regarded herself as a better person and a more

¹⁹ Holland, *Journal*, i, p. 26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6. Elizabeth's mother and female friends suggested that she should not venture on her own in a journey with her [first] husband. Thus, she joined the Duncannons and Devonshires in their journey.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

useful member of society, not ‘a zero in society’ any more.²⁴ This growing self-confidence was an important development in becoming a successful hostess at Holland House. As Lady Holland told Lady Bessborough, she believed ‘all women of a certain age and in a situation to achieve it should take to Politicks’.²⁵ Leslie Mitchell points out that, Lord and Lady Holland were familiar with contemporary European political figures and political change. Their European experience, moreover, taught them that the running of a successful salon was an effective weapon in politics.²⁶ It seems that Lady Holland had been through a ‘revolution’ of mind and had acquired a purpose: she wanted to establish herself in society, yet she resisted following the traditional role of ‘feminine’ woman. She became interested in the ‘masculine’ activities of travel and the discussion of politics.

Mary Berry (1763–1852), writer and editor, viewed ‘travel’ in a traditional way: travel was a means of education and cultivation of manners and taste, in spite of the fact that the Grand Tour was usually regarded as an education for men, not women. Further, she sought to be received among upper-class society in Europe. Her father Robert Berry failed to secure an inheritance from his rich uncle Robert Ferguson (1690–1781) and a fine social position for his family.²⁷ As a result, the strong-willed

²⁴ Lady Holland wrote in 1793: ‘I am but as a zero in society, attached to none, belong to none I esteem’, *ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁵ Lady Bessborough to Lord G. Leveson Gower, 5 Feb 1811, quoted in Mitchell, *Holland House*, p. 21.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁷ The following biographical background of Mary Berry and her family came from her autobiography,

Mary Berry determined to improve her family's social status and 'travel' was an efficient way to achieve her purpose.²⁸ The young Berry could not think of Ferguson's will without her blood boiling in her veins, and regretting that she 'had not been present to support and reply for her father'.²⁹ Because of her father's 'easy inefficient character' and his 'silent ... acquiesce[nce] in all this', she felt a sense of responsibility for her family.³⁰ It appears that she believed herself capable of taking the leading role in her family. A man like her father did not necessarily have enough masculine qualities of strength and authority. Yet a woman like her could either be born with these attributes or obtain them through experience and training.

In 1783, Mary Berry, her sister, Agnes Berry, and their father set off on their first European tour – 'This had long been the first of my wishes', she wrote.³¹ While being in a strange land, knowing no one but her family, she realized that she had

reprinted in Mary Berry, *Extracts of the Journals and Correspondence from the year 1783 to 1852*, ed. Theresa Lewis (3 vols., London, 1865), i, pp. 1-15.

²⁸ Mary Berry's father, Robert Berry, was the nephew of a Scottish merchant, Robert Ferguson (1690–1781), who had made a great fortune of almost £300,000. Ferguson desired a male heir to his fortune; thus he was disappointed by the birth of Mary in 1763, and her sister Agnes (1764-1852) in the following year. Yet, in 1763, Mary's mother died in giving birth to a third daughter, who did not survive her mother. Robert Berry was trained as a lawyer, but never practised this profession. Meanwhile Robert Berry's younger brother, William, had ingratiated himself with his wealthy uncle. He was adept at business, and married a woman of considerable wealth and produced two sons. Mary thought that William deliberately intrigued to oust his brother from his inheritance: 'He soon perceived the carelessness of his elder brother's character, and how little it fell in, in any respect, with that of the old man, and how easily he could assimilate himself to all his views', Mary Berry, *The Berry Papers: being the Correspondence hitherto unpublished, of Mary and Agnes Berry, 1763-1853*, ed. Lewis Melville (London, 1914), p. 7. After the death of Ferguson, he left William £300,000 in the funds, with an estate worth £4000 to £5000 per annum. Robert Berry received a bare legacy of £10,000, 'with no mention at all of his two children'. Berry, *Extracts*, i, p. 9. William settled an annuity of £1000 per year on his brother.

²⁹ Berry, *Extracts*, i, p. 10.

³⁰ Berry, *The Berry Papers*, p. 8.

³¹ Berry, *Extracts*, i, p. 11.

nothing to depend on except her powers of mind, and then she became the leader of her family: 'for the first time I began to feel my situation, and how entirely dependent I was on my own resources for my conduct, responsibility, and success'.³² Her father was not her protector and monitor anymore:

I soon found that I had to lead those who ought to have led me; that I must be a protecting mother, instead of a gay companion to my sister; and to my father a guide and monitor, instead of finding in him a tutor and protector. Strongly impressed as I was that honour, truth, and virtue were the only roads to happiness, and that the love and consideration of my fellow-creatures, and the society in which I was to live, dependent entirely upon my own conduct and exertions, the whole powers of my mind would be *safe*, without a consideration of what I knew would be agreeable, while I had at the same time the most lively sense of everything that was brilliant and distinguished, and the greatest desire to distinguish myself. Add to this, the most painfully quick feelings, and the necessity for the support of some kind sympathizing mind, and it is easy to imagine how little I could profit by all the advantages nature had given me, but how little I could have enjoyed of the thoughtless gaiety and lighthearted of youth.³³

Accordingly, she believed in the strength of her mind, and was prepared to distinguish herself and to be a strong protector of her family. She pushed herself to be strong person rather than being a girlish dependent woman. In addition, she learned that European travel provided the best way not only to improve her mind but also to meet upper-class people in order to raise her and her family's social rank.³⁴ Therefore, Berry was presented to the Pope in Rome in 1784;³⁵ she became a friend of Madame

³² Berry, *The Berry Papers*, pp. 11-12.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

³⁵ Berry, *Extracts*, i, pp. 61-2.

de Staël in Paris in 1791;³⁶ and during the Peace of Amiens in 1802 she was presented to Napoleon Bonaparte and Madame Bonaparte.³⁷ Her circle of acquaintances in London included Horace Walpole, Princess of Caroline, Joanna Baillie, Maria Edgeworth, among others, in the different periods of her life.³⁸

Horace Walpole, a close friend of the Berrys, wrote to the Berry sisters in the course of their travels in 1791, and approved their instruction in art:

Can one have too many resources in one's self? Internal armour is more necessary to your sex than weapons to ours. You have neither professions nor politics nor ways of getting money like men, in any of which, whether successful or not, they are employed.³⁹

Female education, in Walpole's view, was designed to make a woman a good wife and mother with virtue - a typical female role that Rousseau designed for Sophie in his *Emile*. As I have mentioned in Chapter 1, Rousseau's sexual politics were generally accepted in Georgian Britain: women's education 'should be always relative to that of men', and women were denied the quality of reason.⁴⁰ Walpole therefore thought that a proper woman should focus on the cultivation of her virtue instead of talking about politics and making money like men. But as indicated previously, many educated women, most of them self-taught, in the late eighteenth century began to question

³⁶ *Ibid.*, i, pp. 370-4.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, ii, p. 189.

³⁸ For a brief introduction to Mary Berry's acquaintances and friends, see Charles Kent, 'Berry, Mary', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2266?docPos=1>>.

³⁹ Horace Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Mary and Agnes Berry and Barbara Cecilia Seton*, ed. W. S. Lewis and A. Dayle Wallace (2 vols., London, 1944), i, pp. 90-1.

⁴⁰ Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 85.

Rousseauan education for women and Rousseauan femininity. They were ready to reveal their individuality in various ways. Mary Berry was one of these. Therefore, contrary to Walpole's views, Berry proved her authority in the masculine world: gradually she developed a profession as writer and editor, and she discussed politics in her writings and in her salon with distinguished guests from England and France at a later stage in her life.

Berry's frequent travels on the European Continent in the next five decades - 1783-1785, 1790-1791, 1802, 1802-1803, 1816, and several times after the 1820s, successfully broadened her mind. Furthermore, in 1828, she wrote and published *A Comparative View of the Social Conditions of England and France from the Restoration of Charles the Second to the French Revolution* in 1828 and its sequel *Social Life in England and France from the French Revolution in 1789 to that of July 1830* in 1831, combined with her reflections on her experiences during the events of the French Revolution and the rise and the fall of Bonaparte. These volumes represent her views and opinions on French society. In the end, having in 1783 bemoaned 'how little I could profit by all the advantages nature had given me',⁴¹ now in 1845, aged eighty-two, she felt satisfied with the fact that she was respected in society: 'I feel my self more considered, more sought after, more flattered by worldly attentions, than I

⁴¹ Berry, *The Berry Papers*, p. 12.

was when I might be said to have deserved them'.⁴² While Lady Elizabeth Holland enriched her life via her extensive travel experiences, Mary Berry came to know her inner desires through the process of travel, and managed strong-mindedly to pursue her goal throughout her whole life.

B. Independence and Liberty

'Travel' made one more independent, and 'to keep a travel journal' let one think while making a tour. Through independence, Lady Elizabeth Holland gained some freedom.

In 1791 Lady Holland had been happy to set off for France instead of staying at home facing Sir Godfrey across the dinner table. She was even happier to travel alone without her husband's companionship. She recalled in the summer of 1792 that Sir Godfrey Webster was required to return to England in late 1791, 'I was left *alone* at twenty years old in a foreign country without a relation or any real friend, yet some of the least miserable, I might add the most happy hours, of my life were passed there.'⁴³

It was her circumstances which encouraged her towards independence. She was pushed to be independent, and loved the taste of liberty. As has been pointed out, she largely widened her world in travelling, and through it she was provided with education, experience, company and peace of mind. Not only did travel give her freedom, but it also equipped her with a sound understanding to pursue what she

⁴² Berry, *Extracts*, iii, p. 493.

⁴³ Holland, *Journal*, i, p. 5.

wanted in her life instead of being a meek and docile wife.

As we might expect, the new Lady Holland had to pay a heavy social price for her scandals and her divorce from Sir Godfrey. Because of her, Holland House attracted social censure. As Mitchell indicates, 'the divorce had been the scandal of the year' and Lady Holland 'could not attend any social functions without causing confusion and embarrassment' for two or three years.⁴⁴ Her former husband, Sir Godfrey Webster, hoped that

Lady H. will descend to ordinary and practical Conduct in future - for another such Coup will render Her Situation not pleasure - I never could Convince Her of the necess[ity] of Conformity to Established Rules. She always looked upon them as formed by Dull People, and Calculated for Des Esprits bornes - But as such Make up the Mass of Mankind they Must not be openly shocked, or ill treated.⁴⁵

Sir Godfrey understood her well, at least in this point, that she could never be convinced by 'the necessity of conformity to established rules' and had always considered them 'formed by dull people'. She was reluctant to follow social rules for women. Lady Holland, therefore, showed no embarrassment and never let concerns over unconventional behaviour break her stride. Her self-determined personality, intelligence and energy made her stand up to opprobrium. She not only proved to the world that she could sustain a successful marriage, but opened and presided over a remarkable salon at Holland House.

⁴⁴ Mitchell, *Holland House*, p. 20.

⁴⁵ Sir G. Webster to J. Barham, 13 July 1799, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 20.

Some young ladies went beyond the confines of home and eloped with their lovers to pursue their own happiness. Mary Shelley's (1797–1851) elopement in 1814 to the Continent with the married Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) was doubtless the most well-known example of this kind. As with other women who are explored in this chapter, travel became a turning point in their lives. Their lives afterwards were changed largely owing to their decisions made before or during the trip and their fearless adventurism in pursuing the enthusiasm of the mind. So it was with Mary Shelley. Her escape from the household of Godwin was not only for the pursuit of love, but also to escape 'the tyranny which is exercised upon her' as well as to create her own family.⁴⁶ It is recorded in *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* that 'we ... seek in that romantic and interesting country some cottages where we might dwell in peace and solitude. Such were our dreams, which we should probably have realized, had it not been for the deficiency of that indispensable article money, which obliged us to return to England'.⁴⁷ Due to Mary Shelley's unhappy experience in the Godwin household, she craved a family with 'peace and solitude', and with Percy Shelley, she thought that they could fulfil this dream.

⁴⁶ These are the words Percy Shelly wrote to his wife Harriet on 14 July 1814 to explain the reasons he eloped with Mary Shelley and to wish that Harriet could appreciate Mary's sufferings at home. Quoted in Miranda Seymour, *Mary Shelley* (London, 2000), p. 94.

⁴⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland*, in *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, ed. Jeanne Moskal (8 vols., London, 1996), viii, p. 29. The primary material of this travelogue was drawn from Mary Shelley's revised version of the journal she kept between July and August 1814, during her European elopement with Percy. Shelley expanded her travel journals and also added her later account of a summer trip to Europe in 1816, together with Shelley's and Percy's letters during the journey.

Mary Shelley, born in 1797, was the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, two radical political philosophers of the eighteenth century.⁴⁸ Wollstonecraft died of septicaemia ten days after Shelley was born. Despite the absence of her mother, Shelley's childhood was happily surrounded with her father's love and the memory of her mother.⁴⁹ Moreover, she grew up with the support of her parents' philosophy. As she wrote to her friend Frances Wright:

The memory of my Mother has been always been the pride & delight of my life.... Her greatness of soul & my father[']s high talents have perpetually reminded me that I ought to degenerate as little as I could from those from whom I derived my being ... my chief merit must always be derived, first from the glory these wonderful beings have shed [? around] me, & then for the enthusiasm I have for [the] excellent & the ardent admiration I feel for those who sacrifice themselves for the public good.⁵⁰

The pride of and admiration for her parents' personality and contributions to society as well as the influence of her parents over her was expressed in these words. As I shall explore in Chapter 9, although with adjustments, Shelley especially cherished her mother's searching for an ideal form of society and her inquiry of human nature.

⁴⁸ According to Anne K. Mellor, Godwin assumed full responsibility for Fanny, whom he called Fanny Godwin, the daughter of Wollstonecraft and Gilbert Imlay. See Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (London, 1988), p. 4.

⁴⁹ Mary Shelley's attachment to Godwin and Godwin's love for his children can be seen from Godwin's letter (11 July 1800) to James Marshall, who was responsible for the children during Godwin's absence in 1800, 'Their talking about me, as you say they do, makes me wish to be with them, and will probably have some effect in inducing me to shorten my visit. It is the first time I have been seriously separated from them since they lost their mother, and I feel as if it was very naughty in me to have come away so far Tell Mary I will not give her away, and she shall be nobody's little girl but papa's. Papa is gone away, but papa will very soon come back again', C. Kegan Paul, *William Godwin, His Friends and Contemporaries* (2 vols., London, 1876), i, pp. 364-5. This letter also revealed Mary's anxiety about the loss of her father.

⁵⁰ Mary Shelley to Frances Wright, 12 September 1827, in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. Betty T. Bennett (3 vols., Baltimore, 1983), ii, pp. 3-4.

Yet, in December 1801 Godwin married Mary Jane Clairmont, a widow with a six-year-old son Charles and a four-year-old daughter Jane (Claire).⁵¹ Henceforth, his affection for Mary Jane made Mary Shelley feel abandoned. When she looked back on her younger days, Shelley thought Godwin's second marriage threatened her 'excessive and romantic attachment' to her father.⁵² Life at home, for Shelley, therefore, gradually became governed by turbulence. Some turbulence and melancholy were certainly caused by Shelley's resentment of her stepmother, which made the relationship between her and her father worse.⁵³

Consequently, Percy Bysshe Shelley's appearance in the Godwin household, the very image of a hero of romance, was very attractive. Mary Shelley first met Percy in 1812 and declared her affection for him on 26 June 1814.⁵⁴ Godwin failed in his attempts to convince both his daughter and Percy to end the relationship. At 5 a.m. on the morning of 28 July, therefore, Mary Shelley, accompanied by her stepsister Claire, met with Percy at a waiting coach, and, with very little money, they eloped to the

⁵¹ Described by Godwin's friend James Marshall, Mary Jane Clairmont was 'a clever, bustling, second-rate woman, glib of tongue and pen, with a temper undisciplined and uncontrolled; not bad-hearted, but with a complete absence of all the finer sensibilities', quoted in Mellor, *Mary Shelley*, p. 7.

⁵² Mary Shelley to Maria Gisborne, 30 Oct - 17 Nov 1834, in Shelley, *Letters*, ii, p. 215.

⁵³ In Mary's letter to Percy Shelley in 1814, she wrote: 'I detest Mrs. G. she plagues my father out of his life', Mary Shelley to Percy Shelley, 27 Oct 1814, in Shelley, *Letters*, i, p. 3.

⁵⁴ In Shelley, Mary saw everything she had desired: a young, handsome and enthusiastic poet, who shared her passion for both her parents and who offered her the opportunity to replicate her parents' love and to create her own family which she had longed for. Mellor explains, 'For Mary, Percy was a youthful version of her father, a revolutionary and a philosopher, but one, in contrast to Godwin, who might fully reciprocate her love and embrace her as his companion'. For Percy Shelley, 'Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin embodied the soul mate and intellectual beauty he had been seeking', Mellor, *Mary Shelley*, p. 20.

Continent. As Mary Shelley recalled twelve years later, 'every inconvenience was hailed as a new chapter in the romance of our travels'.⁵⁵ In the land of France, they looked for freedom and Shelley was eager to create a home for herself with a sense of security.⁵⁶

C. Challenging Culturally-Defined Femininity

These women's behaviour differed from the popular thinking about gender in eighteenth-century Britain. As I have indicated in the Introduction and Chapter 1, from the second half of the eighteenth century, there were voices raised against women's high profile in public and against those who shared the attributes of masculinity. Incensed by those 'unruly' women who disregarded the 'nature order' of the distinctions of women/nature and men/mind supposed by the Rousseauians, Richard Polwhele satirized these radical women in *The Unsex'd Females, a Poem* (1798): 'Survey with me, what ne'er our fathers saw, A female band despising NATURE's law'.⁵⁷ This band of 'unfeminine' women indulged themselves in masculine subjects such as writing with masculine form of inquiry, talking about politics and reform, and joining public activities: they 'dismiss[ed] the heart' and

⁵⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, 'The English in Italy', *Westminster Review*, 6th series, 326(1826), in Claire Clairmont, *The Journals of Claire Clairmont*, ed. Marion Kingston Stocking (Massachusetts, 1968), Appendix A, p. 442.

⁵⁶ Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, p. 24, 29; Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814-1844*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (2 vols., Oxford, 1987), i, p. 15.

⁵⁷ Richard Polwhele, *The Unsex'd Females, a Poem* (1798), reprinted in Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, p. 288.

‘vaunt[ed] the imperious mien’.⁵⁸ Thus, according to Claudia L. Johnson, Polwhele’s ‘unsex’d females’ were in fact ‘oversexed’ women, and this is what horrified Polwhele most.⁵⁹ Polwhele’s ‘unsex’d females’ carried different meanings from Wollstonecraft’s ‘unsexed’ women. For Wollstonecraft, it meant that women were born without gender distinction. These ‘oversexed’ women wanted to be men or to do what were supposed to be men’s activities. Some women were wary of ‘unsex’d’ women. Laetitia Matilda Hawkins’s *Letters on the Female Mind, Addressed to Miss H. M. Williams, with Particular Reference to Her Letters from France* (1792) echoed Rousseau’s idea in *Emile* that women lacked the capacity and intelligence to discuss politics. Hawkins published her work anonymously. Her *Letters* wants to remind the readers the crisis of the natural order of her time, because the principles of French Revolution were ‘poisoning’ British women and encouraging them to enter the political realm - the male realm.⁶⁰ Moreover, as Dorinda Outram indicates, Hawkins responded to Wollstonecraft’s assertion of equality between the sexes by asserting that ‘Nature certainly intended a distinction ... In general, and almost universally, the feminine intellect has less strength and more acuteness.’⁶¹ For Hawkins and for most

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

⁵⁹ Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender and Sentimentality in the 1790s: Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (Chicago, 1995), p. 9.

⁶⁰ See also Steven Blakemore, ‘Revolution and the French Disease: Laetitia Matilda Hawkins’s *Letters to Helen Maria Williams*’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 36 (1996), 673-691.

⁶¹ Laetitia Matilda Hawkins’s *Letters on the Female Mind, Addressed to Miss H. M. Williams, with Particular Reference to Her Letters from France* (1792), quote in Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 85.

eighteenth-century people, femininity belonged to women while masculinity could only exist in men. Outram points out that ‘today it is often stated that each individual is unique in his or her mixture of “masculine” or “feminine” attributes’,⁶² yet in the eighteenth century people tended to distinguish the sexes and genders in a very general way. Though still relatively few, more and more women began to question their traditionally-categorized gender role and wanted to extend the boundaries of their lives. Therefore, Linda Colley argues that the fact that more and more debates over woman’s proper position in society were taking place demonstrates that the realm supposedly separating men and women became more and more unstable in practice.⁶³

Some of those who asserted the traditional female role questioned the concept of femininity as well.⁶⁴ They accepted the traditionally-defined femininity of the delicacy of feelings and observations, and of sensibility and pure moral virtue. Some might refuse to read Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman*, as did Hannah More (1745–1833),⁶⁵ because they disagreed with Wollstonecraft’s concept of ‘unsexed’,

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁶³ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2nd edn., London, 2005), p. 250.

⁶⁴ Evelyn Gordon Bodek discusses Bluestockings such as Elizabeth Robinson Montagu (1720-1800), Hannah More, Elizabeth Carter, Hester Mulso Chapone (1727-1801), Frances Burney and Hester Lynch Piozzi (1740-1821) in her essay, ‘Salonières and Bluestockings: Educated Obsolescence and Germinating Feminism’, *Feminist Studies*, 3 (1976), 185-99. She points out that these elite women were conventional – they accepted their social position as it was and did not stress the rights of women as Wollstonecraft. Yet they claimed that ‘women had intelligence and personal qualities that could elevate social life’, 196. That is to say, although they were conventional, they began to question the traditional definition about women and femininity. See 195-6.

⁶⁵ Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford, 2003), p. 217.

even masculinized, women. Hannah More was one of the most influential figures in this category in the 1790s, and it was not until recently that some researchers, beginning with Mitzi Myer's essay, 'Reform or Ruin: "A Revolution in Female Manners"', have come to the conclusion that More was not a reactionary thinker as many scholars had previously suggested.⁶⁶ The recent biography of More also demonstrates More's complex character that she 'worked for change while supporting existing hierarchies', that she 'deplored attempts to extend the franchise, yet taught working men to read' and that 'though deeply hostile to overt feminism, she longed for women to realize their spiritual and intellectual potential'.⁶⁷ More successfully developed a programme to reform the manners of both sexes within the existing social order. Most important of all, she set up a number of projects, which stressed rational education, chastity, modesty and refined sensibility, to reform the flawed female education and female manners. She criticized the female education of her age in the opening paragraph of her book, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*: 'It is a singular injustice which is often exercised towards women, first to give them a most defective Education, and then to expect from them the most undeviating purity of conduct.'⁶⁸ That is to say, the flawed education which focused on fashionable arts,

⁶⁶ Mitzi Myer, 'Reform or Ruin: "A Revolution in Female Manners"', reprinted in Wollstonecraft, *Rights of Woman*, pp. 319-35. For the discussion of the different evaluation of Hannah More's achievement, see Stott, *Hannah More*, and Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington, 2000), pp. 13-18.

⁶⁷ Stott, *Hannah More*, p. xi.

⁶⁸ Hannah More, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (2 vols., London, 1799), i, p.

instead of offering solid moral and intellect training, only made women frivolous. She stressed that the professions of women were those of 'daughters, wives, mothers, and mistresses of families',⁶⁹ and their role was vital. Thus they should be trained with a series of 'ideas and principles' so that they could 'reason and reflect, and feel and judge, and discourse', and could apply their knowledge to many purposes, be good companions to their husbands, assist them to do their jobs and educate their children.⁷⁰ Until women have a rational education as men, as More asserted, 'we shall have no juster ground for pronouncing that their understanding has already reached its highest attainable perfection',⁷¹ and 'this question will remain as undecided as to the degree of difference between the understandings of men and women'.⁷² Moreover, for More, as Mellor indicates, women were naturally suited to the exercise of chastity because of their tenderness and sensibility.⁷³ Thus, while More was regarded as a propagandist who proclaimed that women should only stay at home, she actually suggested, as Mellor argues, an 'active' rather than passive role for women to contribute themselves in schools and philanthropic societies.⁷⁴

To a certain degree, More's reform of female manners, her ideal of the female role in a nation and her concept of female qualities were not far from those of the

ix.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷³ See Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation*, p. 28.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

radical Wollstonecraft. While studying Wollstonecraft and More at the same time, their contemporary Mary Berry felt amazed that they ‘agree on all the great points of female education. H. More will, I dare say, be very angry when she hears this.’⁷⁵ Wollstonecraft and More both emphasized female virtue, modesty, rational intellectual and refined feelings, and they believed in women’s importance both in family and in society.⁷⁶ Some conservatives such as Frances Elizabeth King and Frances Burney, like More, had never challenged the social position of women and talked about the civil rights of women,⁷⁷ and were happy that women did not need to be ‘politicians’ and ‘warriors’.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, they believed in women’s ability and rational intellect.⁷⁹ They accepted female delicacy and sensibility, yet this did not prevent them from being rational writers and displaying their influence in literature.

For example, Frances Elizabeth King, a correspondent of Hannah More, and appearing to be a follower of More, published *A Tour in France, 1802*, in 1809, in which she condemned the revolutionaries and discussed philanthropic institutions, the manners of the poor and religion. Like More, all through her life, King insisted on the

⁷⁵ Berry, *Extracts*, ii, p.91.

⁷⁶ Myers writes: ‘the unexpected congruence of the ideals and programs expressed in such politically polar works as Wollstonecraft’s *Rights of Woman* (1792) and More’s *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), *Coelebs*’s thematic precursor...the parallels between the two texts extend far beyond their mutual insistence on the radical renovation of female education and manners as prerequisites to a moral restructuring of society’, in Myer, ‘Reform or Ruin’, pp. 324-5; and also Anne K. Mellor, ‘*The Rights of Women* and the Women Writers of Wollstonecraft’s day’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 147-8.

⁷⁷ More, *Strictures*, i, p. 135.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ See Mary Clare Martin, ‘King, Frances Elizabeth’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 < <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15561>>, and Bodek, ‘Salonières and Bluestockings’.

natural differences between the two sexes.⁸⁰ She asserted women's natural and proper role in domesticity. Yet she stressed that women's domestic duties did not mean they should be confined only to the home. As her biographer, Mary Clare Martin, puts it, King published several literary works and was also active in her husband's parishes, in the establishment of schools for children of the poor, and in other philanthropic societies. She was a paradoxical figure like More. While approving the conduct books' teaching that women should retreat into the domestic sphere, they appeared as public women. By studying the life of the conservative women, therefore, we can also find out that the position of women was diverse, and increasingly changed towards the end of the century. Although many conservative conduct books suggest a rigid gender boundaries in the late eighteenth century, these boundaries were actually fluid when we investigate the lives and the activities of these 'conservative' women.

Moreover, during the Revolutionary age from 1789 to 1815, many conservative women became anti-Gallican and were worried about French influence in politics. For those who travelled to France, the route to be a proper woman was to stress the company of their husbands during the journey, so showing they were good wives and were not in danger of travelling alone. In addition, they published their accounts anonymously or under a pseudonym. Hannah More published her political work

⁸⁰ See Martin, 'King, Frances Elizabeth'.

Village Politics: Addressed to All the Mechanics, Journeymen, and Day Labourers, in Great Britain (1792) to ridicule Thomas Paine's enthusiasm for the French Revolution under the name 'Will Chip, a country carpenter',⁸¹ and published a series of one hundred and fourteen tracts, contributed to Church and King, anonymously as Cheap Repository Tracts.⁸² Likewise, a conservative British woman published her travel writing, *A Residence in France, during the Years 1792, 1793, 1794, and 1795* (1797), under the name 'English Lady'. As the thesis will explore in Chapter 7, this author wrote her political reflections on the recent events in highly conservative tones, criticized the Revolution and agreed with Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. This author intended to embody true patriotic womanhood for British readers, thus she emphasized the company of her husband, her support for the church and king, and loyalist propaganda.

The radical travel writer Helen Maria Williams (1761-1827) accepted the traditional view of female sensibility as well. Before Wollstonecraft set off for France in the winter of 1792, there had been some radical Britons in Paris witnessing the events of the recent Revolution. Helen Maria Williams arrived in Paris on 13 July 1790 and observed the French Revolution at first hand, leaving eight accounts of what she saw and thought. Throughout her literary career, she, like Wollstonecraft, insisted

⁸¹ Hannah More, *Village politics: addressed to all the mechanics, journeymen, and day labourers, in Great Britain* (London, 1792), title page.

⁸² See Stott, *Hannah More*, pp. 169-90.

on her belief in the principles of the Revolution, in spite of the unfriendly reactions to her from British readers after 1793. In contrast to Wollstonecraft, whose two *Vindications*, undertaking ‘masculine subjects’, were reasoned in a language ‘freed from all female *prettiness*’,⁸³ Williams stressed that, ‘my political creed is entirely an affair of the heart’.⁸⁴ Instead of taking a rational form of inquiry like her radical friends such as Thomas Paine, Richard Price and William Godwin, Williams wrote about the ‘masculine’ subjects of empire, the French Revolution and political reform, in a ‘feminine’ style. She explained the reasons for her reliance on her female emotional nature: ‘I have not been so absurd as to consult my head upon matters of which it is so incapable of judging’.⁸⁵ She did not claim to be as capable of discussing political issues as men. *The Analytical Review* responded to Williams’ *Letters* in 1790 by writing that, ‘Her reflections on the French Revolution are truly feminine, and such an air of sincerity runs through the descriptive part of her letters’.⁸⁶ She insisted that, as a female writer and poet, she only consulted her heart/nature in commenting the French Revolution. Consequently she did not violate the binary of men/mind (head) and women/nature (heart). Helen Maria Williams

⁸³ *English Review* (1791), 61. Quoted in Deborah Kennedy, ‘Benevolent Historian: Helen Maria Williams and her British Readers’, in *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, ed. Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke (Albany, 2001), p. 319.

⁸⁴ Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Written in France: in the Summer 1790, to a Friend in England, Containing Various Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution*, ed. Neil Fraistat and Susan S. Lanser (New York, 2001), p. 91.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁸⁶ *The Analytical Review* (1790), 431, in *ibid.*, Appendix C, p. 213.

might realize that for a British woman to publish a book supporting the French Revolution would expose her to the charge of un-femininity and unpatriotic behaviour after Britain and France went to war in 1793. She thus consciously stressed that she was writing with a female pen. Indeed, she made a claim for her own power of female sensibility to perceive the Revolution, which was superior to men's rationality in observation.

As this chapter has argued, numerous women of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, no matter whether they agreed or disagreed with culturally-constructed femininity, challenged the conventional female character and refused to be tagged as irrational. In addition, the experience of displacement might have helped these British women renegotiate their preconceived opinions about themselves as female. To a certain degree, as Wollstonecraft revealed in her *Rights of Woman*, they wanted to share the qualities of masculinity with men and to be equal with men whether in mind or physical strength. As Mellor puts it, 'women Romantic writers tended to celebrate not the achievements of the imagination nor the overflow of powerful feelings, but rather the working of the rational mind, a mind relocated – in a gesture of revolutionary gender implications – in the female as well as the male body'.⁸⁷ Women writers of late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century

⁸⁷ Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Gender* (London, 1993), p. 2.

deliberately restrained their 'powerful feelings' in their published works and seemed to shun traditionally-defined feminine identities. Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, Mary Berry and Elizabeth Holland were all examples of this kind. For those who asserted the distinction between female and male characters, they denied the female role as mere soft, sentimental and beautiful dolls at home and re-defined females as rational and modest creatures and as having a more active and useful role in society. Both the liberal and conservative women discussed in this chapter, therefore, were unwilling to be passive and weak; they all were eager to make decisions for themselves and to prove their influence and power in certain areas. My argument thus suggests a more complex female stance among educated females in late eighteenth-century society. As we shall see in Chapters 3 to 9, these women were ready to express their influence in the 'masculine' political world.

PART TWO

TRAVEL AND REVOLUTION

CHAPTER 3

THE BURKE-WOLLSTONECRAFT DEBATE

Part One of the thesis has discussed how British women travellers challenged conventional female roles. Many of them negotiated with and broadened the traditionally defined femininity in the late eighteenth century. Part Two will explore British women's political responses to the Revolution controversy and their ideas of future perfectibility during their travels to Continental Europe. Edmund Burke (1729-1792) and Mary Wollstonecraft are the two important figures in the discussion that follows because their arguments remained central to this controversy and were responded to directly by British women travellers. Moreover, with the general acceptance of Burkean thought after the Terror and the outbreak of war between France and Britain, patriotism and nationalism would become a significant aspect in women's writings at the end of the eighteenth century and in the early nineteenth century. This chapter focuses on Burke's reflections on the French Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft's political responses to Burke and her arguments concerning the Revolution.

A. Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*

In January 1790 Edmund Burke read Richard Price's sermon preached to the annual dinner of the Revolution Society on 4 November 1789. Richard Price, Dissenting preacher, political reformer, one of Mary Wollstonecraft's mentors and friends in Newington Green, gave this famous sermon, entitled *A Discourse on the Love of our Country*, in an attempt to defend the French Revolution. He compared the principles of the Revolution with those of the British Glorious Revolution in 1688, and argued that the Glorious Revolution, though it had appealed to the rights inherent in the nature of free men, had not fully secured the natural rights of all men, especially those who were Dissenters from the Church of England. Suggesting that Britain's contemporary politics fell short of the principles of the Glorious Revolution, he was excited to witness the French Revolution which would continue the reformation of the governments of the world begun by the American Revolution:

I have lived to see a diffusion of knowledge which has undermined superstition and error. I have lived to see the rights of men better understood than ever, and nations panting for liberty, which seemed to have lost the ideas of it. I have lived to see thirty millions of people, indignant and resolute, spurning at slavery, and demanding liberty with an irresistible voice, their king led in triumph, and an arbitrary monarch surrendering himself to his subjects. After sharing in the benefits of one Revolution, I have been spared to be a witness to two other Revolutions, both glorious. And now, methinks, I see the ardor for liberty catching and spreading, a general amendment beginning in human affairs, the dominion of kings changed for the dominion of laws, and the dominion of priests giving way to the dominion of reason and conscience.¹

¹ Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of our Country* (6th edn., London, 1790), in *The Impact of the French Revolution: Texts from Britain in the 1790s*, ed. Iain Hampsher-Monk (Cambridge, 2005), p. 54.

Some of Burke's views on the French Revolution had been written in the form of a letter to his young French friend, Charles-Jean-François Dupont, who had asked for Burke's opinions on the recent events in Paris.² Now, stimulated by Price's *Discourse*, Burke decided to publish his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, in part as a response to Price. It was published on 1 November 1790.

Although titled *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke himself had only visited France once for three months in 1773 and had never been to Paris. As a result, his opinions of the *ancien régime* and of the French revolutionaries were often coloured by his own personal conditions and his descriptions of French events were partly inaccurate. Thomas Paine thought Burke 'very unacquainted with French affairs'.³ Burke idealized the old monarchy and, like most of his contemporaries, viewed the French Revolution as a sudden and unexpected move; that is to say, he underestimated the force of social and political change in France in the 1780s. Yet Burke's thesis was not meant to be another account of the French Revolution. His book was more about his reflections on British politics. It was published for British readers in order to remind them that the dangerously violent forces of the French Revolution, which was attempting to be a total revolution and expecting to set up a new order based on democracy and on the revolutionaries' speculations about future

² See Edmund Burke, 'Letter to Charles-Jean-François Depont (November 1789)', in Edmund Burke, *Further Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Daniel E. Ritchie (Indianapolis, 1992), pp. 5-17.

³ Quoted in L. G. Mitchell, 'Introduction', in Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. L. G. Mitchell (Oxford, 1999), pp. vii-viii.

perfectibility, would bring anarchy and destroy western civilization. He endeavoured to persuade the British of the practical virtues of the existing social, political and moral order, and warned that what was happening in France could happen in Britain as well.

The *Reflections* became a best-seller immediately: it sold 13,000 copies in the first two weeks, and, by Burke's death in 1797, 30,000 copies had been sold.⁴ It was also widely translated. Though he was judged as a 'madman' by the liberal Whigs and the radicals after the book was published,⁵ because of his interpretation of the events of the Revolution, political developments on the continent, which became violent and endangered Britain after 1793, apparently proved Burke's prophetic power, believed by most British men and women. The *Reflections* became an essential work on political thought at the end of the eighteenth century. It not only widely influenced the elite British males, but also women of letters, a fact which will be demonstrated in the following chapters. Research on Burke's *Reflections* has indicated that this work generated a great pamphlet debate, yet the debate was documented in unbalanced way: most of the opinions favourable to Burke, though abundant, were recorded in private diaries and letters, whereas many of those who disagreed with him were important

⁴ Hampsher-Monk, 'Editorial Note', *The Impact of the French Revolution*, p. 58.

⁵ William Windham, a friend of Burke, wrote in his diary that Burke was 'a man decried, persecuted and proscribed, and by half the nation considered as little better than an ingenious madman', William Windham, *The Diary of the Right Hon. William Windham, 1784-1810*, ed. Mrs. Henry Baring (London, 1866), p. 213. For the contemporary reception of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, see, for example, F. P. Lock, *Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1985), ch. 5, 'Contemporary Reception', pp. 132-65.

writers and thinkers of the day, and published their political opinions against Burke under the authors' own names, such as Catherine Macaulay, Joseph Priestley, Thomas Paine, James Mackintosh, William Godwin, among others.⁶ But the first person to reply to Burke was the not-yet-famous Mary Wollstonecraft.

Wollstonecraft's work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, was published within a month of Burke's work on 29 November. She disagreed with Burke's view of the Revolution, and discussed the basic issues of the rights of men, and the legitimacy of monarchy, and also offered a defence of the rational method applying to moral and political thought. Thus, the Burke-Wollstonecraft debate began, and it nurtured the 'Revolution controversy' in the 1790s. The radicals tried hard to justify the Revolution and debated political legitimacy, natural rights, political happiness, and the process of civilization. As Iain Hampsher-Monk puts it, the French Revolution became 'the touchstone of modernity'.⁷ This cataclysmic event produced various political ideologies, and political enquiries on the part of subsequent generations:

The Revolution did not exert this influence through establishing any agreed truths about politics: on the contrary, it generated – and continues to generate – heated opposition and disagreement. But it did construct a field of controversy and placed at centre-stage certain issues and claims

⁶ Lock, *Burke's Reflections*, pp. 132-4. For the furious responses from the radicals, see, Catherine Macaulay, *Observations on the Reflections of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, on the Revolution in France, in a Letter to the Right Hon. The Earl of Stanhope* (1790); Joseph Priestley, *Letters to the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, Occasioned by His Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1791); Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (1791); James Mackintosh, *Vindiciae Gallicae* (1791); William Godwin, *Political Justice* (1793).

⁷ Hampsher-Monk, 'Introduction', in *The Impact of the French Revolution*, p. 1.

that have become the core of political argument.⁸

The French Revolution became a pivotal event for British radicals, who regarded it as a struggle for individual liberty against tyrannical monarchy. Although few defended Burke's views in this frenzy of publishing, Burke's way of interpretation and analysis of the principals of politics, of progress and of state has shaped British and European conservative political philosophy even to the present day.

Burke's opinion on the Revolution was crucial to the development of the Revolution controversy, the main topic of the second part of the thesis. Thus it is necessary to give a detailed discussion of his arguments in the *Reflections*. Burke's French friend, Dupont, had hoped to receive Burke's wholehearted congratulations on the Revolution. Writing in 1790, several years before the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, and before the rise of Robespierre and the Terror, at the moment most British people optimistically believed that France was reborn according to the examples of the Glorious Revolution and the American Revolution, Burke anticipated that the Revolution would be 'the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world'.⁹ 'This ... was not the triumph of France. I must believe that, as a nation, it overwhelmed you with shame and horror.'¹⁰ Burke's *Reflections* focused particularly on an event that took place on 5 and 6 October 1789 in which a crowd of Parisians

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁹ Burke, *Reflections*, p. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

marched to the Palace of Versailles and forced the king and queen of France to return with them to Paris. The Revolution was represented by Burke as the actions of the mob destroying all social and cultural values.¹¹ He stressed that an innovative revolution which promised freedom to all men and endeavoured to transform popular grievance into popular rebellion, without respect for the practical virtue of the existing order, would not bring social progress and human happiness. He viewed it as a great crisis not only of the French, but of all Europe.

Burke persuaded his British readers of the practical virtues of the existing political system – the British constitution, and the dangerous outcome which the French Revolution might bring. Burke's politics were based on a system that had been tested through history. For him, liberty and human rights were beneficial, but they were not the only essentials in politics. These abstract principles must combine 'with governments, with public force, the discipline and obedience of armies, with the collection of an effective and well-distributed revenue, with peace and order, with civil and social manners.'¹² That is to say, liberty could last long only when it existed along with laws and order. By contrast, the French were now building a new state based on the theories of the Enlightenment thinkers and *a priori* reasoning in *The Declaration of the Rights of Men*. This Revolution was, to Burke, unnatural and

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

artificial, because these revolutionaries, ‘the best ... only men of theory’ without any ‘practical experience in the state’,¹³ ignored the traditional social order and Christian religion and attempted to create a government according to their ‘untried speculations’ with ‘nothing in experience to prove their tendency beneficial’.¹⁴ The promises made by the revolutionaries were at best their imagination of the future. This unnatural Revolution with its ideal of pure democracy was thus dangerous and would devastate France.

Whereas the revolutionaries totally neglected their nature, Burke’s fellow British subjects still consulted their natural feelings. His understanding of western civilization depended on two principles and was the result of both combined; ‘the spirit of a gentleman, and the spirit of religion’¹⁵ – the nobility and clergy; the king and church.

Burke wrote:

In England ... we still feel within us, and we cherish and cultivate, those inbred sentiments which are the faithful guardians, the active monitors of our duty, the true supporters of all liberal and manly morals. ... We have real hearts of flesh and blood beating in our bosoms. We fear God; we look up with awe to kings; with affection to parliaments; with duty to magistrates; with reverence to priests; and with respect to nobility. Why? Because when such ideas are brought before our minds, it is *natural* to be so affected; because all other feelings are false and spurious, and tend to corrupt our minds, to vitiate our primary morals, to render us unfit for rational liberty ...¹⁶

Fear of God and respect for the nobility and church were natural according to Burke.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 86-7.

Civilization, which was built on social order, was rooted in natural feelings and morality: 'Good order is the foundation of all good things.'¹⁷ Rather than the speculations and inventions of the Enlightenment thinkers as the French had,¹⁸ the British had therefore obeyed a natural morality that had produced a rational and manly freedom.

In contrast to all the errors of the French, who attempted to build a state based on abstract rights, Burke endeavoured to argue that British society was a successful model of a stable and just society developed from past experience.¹⁹ Burke was not a stubborn antirevolutionary. He had been against any oppressive government which violated the tradition of liberty. As Michael Freeman maintains, rebellion, reformation and revolution were three different sorts of actions to Burke: 'Those who are taking up arms against the state, but are holding to the principles of liberty, are not rebels.'²⁰ Thus those who were against the King and the British government during the American Revolution were not rebels in his conception. Freeman continues,

Rebellion is an attack upon the constitution. Revolution is a change in the constitution. A reformation is the correction of an abuse. A reformation may require a revolution, but a revolution does not necessarily lead to a reformation. The revolution of 1688 was one which led to a reformation. That of 1789 did not.²¹

Burke of course favoured social progress, but such progress must follow the

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35, 86.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31, 33.

²⁰ Michael Freeman, *Edmund Burke and the Critique of Political Radicalism* (Oxford, 1980), p. 174.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

constitutional tradition, and, according to the argument of Freeman, must restore the ancient constitution rather than innovate an untried utopia.²² Burke maintained that, following the principles of ‘conservation’ and ‘correction’ at the critical periods of the Restoration and Revolution in the seventeenth century,²³ the British regenerated the deficient part of the ancient constitution, while the major features of this ancient constitution were retained.

By contrast, the French disregarded their political experiences and wisdom accumulated throughout history. In comparison to Britain’s constitution and politics which followed the flow of British history and British society, the French Revolution was ‘unnatural’ and this difference resulted in the stability of Britain’s politics and the anarchy in France. An unprecedented Revolution on the basis of abstract theory would produce chaos and instability and the result would be tyranny and the destruction of France, he predicted:

They have found their punishment in their success. Laws overturned; tribunals subverted; industry without vigor; commerce expiring; the revenue unpaid, yet the people impoverished; a church pillaged, and a state not relieved; civil and military anarchy made the constitution of the kingdom; every human and divine sacrificed to the idol of public credit, and national bankruptcy the consequence.²⁴

Burke had agreed with the political philosophy of Aristotle that politics should not

²² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

²³ Burke, *Reflections*, p. 22.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

reject the reality of men produced throughout history.²⁵ When such force spread to other European countries, Western civilization accumulated throughout history would be destroyed.

We move on to look at Burke's views on the rights of men. His arguments set the tone for the pamphlet debate on the Revolution in the 1790s and widely influenced educated British women. Burke was hostile to popular rights. He viewed democracy, which he perceived as the essential element of the Revolution, as the beginning of the collapse of civilization. He agreed with Aristotle that 'a democracy has many striking points of resemblance with a tyranny'.²⁶ In his understanding, with democracy, governments must be abused and deranged, because the majority of citizens were capable of exercising the cruelest oppression on the minority, or leading to a 'mischievous' and 'ignoble' oligarchy.²⁷ Without settled order built on convention and proceedings, without common reason, all kinds of evil could break through public order and cause all manners of suffering. Thus, liberty without wisdom and virtue was 'the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint.'²⁸

²⁵ Burke's scepticism and hostility to speculative abstract rationalism developed as early as 1744 when he was at Trinity College, Dublin. As Peter J. Stanlis argues, Burke became aware that 'the rationalist philosophers of the Enlightenment encouraged men to submit to destructive analysis and criticism all the achievements of men throughout history.' Peter J. Stanlis, *Edmund Burke: The Enlightenment and Revolution* (New Brunswick, 1991), p. 150. For Burke's reference to the politics of Aristotle, see *ibid.*, pp. 197-203.

²⁶ Burke, *Reflections*, p. 125.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

In a civil society, every sort of legislative, judicial and executive power was limited and modified by the convention or law, Burke argued.²⁹ In addition, the restrictions and liberties were allowed to be modified according to different times and circumstances; they were not settled by any abstract rule. Hence, instead of the democracy that was claimed by the revolutionaries and Enlightenment thinkers, his British government represented the best prescription of history which, directed by laws, protected men's rights and the natural social order.

B. Wollstonecraft's Responses to Burke

While Price's sermon sparked the 'Revolution controversy', Burke's *Reflections* would further stimulate this debate on the meaning of the Revolution and its political legitimacy. After reading Burke's book, Wollstonecraft's 'indignation was roused by the sophistical arguments ... in the questionable shape of natural feelings and common sense'.³⁰ She thus unhesitatingly picked up her pen to write her own book to defend her old Dissenting friend, Richard Price. Written in an impatient and passionate tone, Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* introduced crucial elements to the Revolutionary debate on the rights of men, especially her refutation of 'gothic' antiquity, the idea of 'natural' and 'artificial' feelings, and the possibility of social progress.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

³⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, reprinted in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men and A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, ed. D.L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (Ontario, 1997), Advertisement.

Whereas Burke proudly pronounced that his countrymen had enjoyed full liberties and rights which were inherited from their forefathers and constitutional tradition, Wollstonecraft wrote about another natural right: the birthright of all human beings. Rights which ‘men inherited at their birth, as rational creatures, who were raised above the brute creation by their improvable faculties; and that, in receiving these, not from their forefathers but, from God, prescription can never undermine natural rights’.³¹ Countering Burke’s arguments that the historical development of political, social and gender hierarchies were natural, Daniel I. O’Neill stresses that Wollstonecraft asserted that the forms of inequality were socially constructed, artificial and pernicious.³² Like Thomas Paine, who asserted all men were created equal and had the right to be free,³³ Wollstonecraft insisted that every man had the right to liberty; but no government in the world had yet secured such liberty in this ‘simple, unsophisticated sense’.³⁴ Thus, the liberty Burke celebrated was the privilege exercised by a minority in order to defend their property. To Wollstonecraft, a society based on the custom of their forefathers was inhumane and did ‘not [understand] the native dignity of man’.³⁵ As I shall demonstrate later, unlike the radicals before the 1790s, the new radicals, such as Paine, Mackintosh and Wollstonecraft, did not appeal

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³² Daniel I. O’Neill, *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate: Savagery, Civilization, and Democracy* (University Park, 2007), p. 157.

³³ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man Part the First Being An Answer to Mr. Burke’s Attack on the French Revolution* (2nd edn., London, 1790), in *The Impact of the French Revolution*, p. 141.

³⁴ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, pp. 37-8.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

to the ancient constitution; they rejected history because they believed the political liberty of Anglo-Saxon time was limited to the owners of landed property. ‘Security of property! Behold, in a few words, the definition of English liberty’,³⁶ she declared. The British government was far from being a model for the French, since the people’s liberty in Britain was often sacrificed to secure the property of the privileged.³⁷ Like her radical friends, she seemed to believe that political reform, that is, every man enjoying his political rights, would bring social reform, and social grievance would be reduced. She criticized the status quo and proposed an ideal, but she did not set out any detailed plan. She alleged that Burke’s feelings of common humanity had been swallowed up by his hostile attitude towards democracy and his respect for rank and ‘so little respect for the silent majesty of misery’.³⁸

Burke emphasized the influence of the past and defended the British constitution as an inheritance from a long line of ancestors. By contrast, as Tom Furniss points out, Wollstonecraft viewed the past as a scene of superstition, oppression, and ignorance,³⁹ and she believed that some elements must be stopped and changed, or people would return to ‘barbarism’.⁴⁰ She criticized his politics of looking backward by saying that ‘Gothic affability is the mode you think proper to adopt, the condescension of a Baron,

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

³⁹ Tom Furniss, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft’s French Revolution’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge, 2002), p. 61.

⁴⁰ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 43.

not the civility of a liberal man.’⁴¹ O’Neill indicates that, for Wollstonecraft, European monarchs’ system of manners was ‘an artificial and pernicious code of social mores which had developed in an oppressive, hierarchical institutional context fatal to the development of reason and thus to moral and civic virtue’.⁴² In Wollstonecraft’s opinion, in order to establish a constitution that provided for the happiness of millions, the Assembly needed to have a ‘higher model in view than the *imagined* virtues of their forefathers’.⁴³ It was not necessary to ‘repair an ancient castle, built in barbarous ages, of Gothic materials’.⁴⁴ Instead, the French destroyed such hierarchies and feudal institutions and gave birth to a new one with an alternative system which might establish the rights of men for the first time in history. She wrote, optimistically therefore, that the Revolution was a great opportunity to obtain ‘more virtue and happiness than has hitherto blessed our globe’.⁴⁵

Burke presented the *ancien régime* as a civilized thing of beauty, embodied by Marie Antoinette, in contrast to the uncivilized violent mob. He wrote of the October Days:

whilst the royal captives who followed in the train were slowly moved along, amidst the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, and all the unutterable abomination of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women.⁴⁶

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴² O’Neill, *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate*, pp. 17-18.

⁴³ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 75.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴⁶ Burke, *Reflections*, p. 72.

Wollstonecraft responded,

Probably you mean women who gained a livelihood by selling vegetables or fish, who never had had any advantages of education; or their vices might have lost part of their abominable deformity, by losing part of their grossness.⁴⁷

Like children in a tyrannical family, as she put it, the majority of the poor were brutalized by tyranny and poverty. It was the monarchy which forced them to react and to break established society with violence. Such was a natural outcome of inequality in France and even throughout Europe.

At this stage, like Burke, she had expected that the Revolution would proceed violently, but she tried to rationalize the upheavals of the French Revolution:

The evil which an individual suffers for the good of the community is partial, it must be allowed, if the account is settled by death. – But the partial evil which it suffers, during one stage of existence, to render another stage more perfect, is strictly just.⁴⁸

The blood of the privileged was a small price to pay in order to construct a new nation which recognized the rights of men. Though she did not propose a violent revolution, she recognized that the obstinate government and governing class which refused reform would force the revolutionaries to take a violent path. If the sacrifice of the privileged minority was a necessary course to reach general happiness, she would agree to it.

To Wollstonecraft and also to her radical friends, the October Days was a scene

⁴⁷ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 62.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

that ‘touch[ed] the human heart’.⁴⁹ Thus, from Wollstonecraft’s point of view, Burke’s lament at the treatment of Marie Antoinette at Versailles by saying ‘the age of chivalry’ was dead was full of the ‘spirit of romance’ and ‘chivalry’.⁵⁰ Burke’s lament provoked many rejections by the radicals. The term romantic was defined by Wollstonecraft as ‘false, or rather artificial, feelings’.⁵¹ Moreover, Furniss explains that it was the ‘romance’ of the medieval period in which the ‘the age of chivalry’ had been celebrated and invented, and which involved notions of courtly love and female delicacy, that Wollstonecraft found damaging to women and men alike.⁵² As these radicals now rejected the past, the age of chivalry meant gothic feudal barbarism, injustice and superstition. For them, the generation of 1789 lived in the age of reason with unlimited possibility of progress. While Burke idealized the *ancien régime* and denounced the Revolution as the way towards anarchy and despotism, the radicals viewed the *ancien régime* as hopeless tyranny despite the fact that Louis XVI had been trying to reform his monarchy. Paine was pleased that ‘the Quixote age of chivalry nonsense is gone’;⁵³ Catherine Macaulay agreed that the orders of chivalry were no longer suitable for this age.⁵⁴ Mackintosh revealed his faith that with the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

⁵⁰ Burke, *Reflections*, p. 76; Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 61.

⁵¹ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 61.

⁵² Furniss, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft’s French Revolution’, p. 62.

⁵³ Paine, *Rights of Man*, p. 138.

⁵⁴ Catherine Macaulay, *Observations on the Reflections of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, on the Revolution in France, in a Letter to the Right Hon. The Earl of Stanhope* (London, 1790), pp. 53-5.

development of rational philosophy and science, 'society is inevitably progressive',⁵⁵ and the age of chivalry should pass. Time had moved on; a new age should have new manners and a new civil code.

In contrast to 'romance', Wollstonecraft celebrated reason, virtue, and the principles of human rights. Yet, she did not exclude sensibility/feelings from her moral politics. As I have mentioned in Chapter 1, civilization, according to Wollstonecraft's observation, was 'the cultivation of the understanding, and refinement of the affections'.⁵⁶ Such were natural and, yet, refined feelings, which were very different from Burkean false feelings. The minds of the privileged, instead of being cultivated, had been polluted by false education. Wollstonecraft argued that these privileged refined their manners 'at the expence of morals, by making sentiments and opinions current in conversation that have no root in the heart'. Thus, she continued, 'the man has been changed into an artificial monster by the station in which he was born, and the consequent homage that benumbed his faculties'.⁵⁷ Therefore, Burke and others, who lamented the fate of the French clergy and nobility, were showing signs of false sensibility. European civilization as it had so far developed was based on false sensibility, and needed to be reformed and improved.

Like Burke, Wollstonecraft's political virtue of patriotism was rooted in family,

⁵⁵ James Mackintosh, *Vindiciae Gallicae* (London, 1791), p. 197.

⁵⁶ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, p. 73.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

but her model of family was conceived very differently from that of Burke. Burke's domestic affection emphasized the values of loyalty and heredity; these values reinforced the bonds of a society according to such dependency. Wollstonecraft's family affection, as was mentioned in Chapter 1, was based on equality and respect. In Wollstonecraft's politics, the initial source of civilization began within a harmonious family with natural parental affection. Patriotism for a nation was an extension of family attachment. When parents treated children like slaves and demanded due homage for all the property they transferred to them, parents forced their children to break 'the most sacred ties' and to 'do violence to a natural impulse'.⁵⁸ It seemed to Wollstonecraft to be a natural suggestion that a man should be freed from implicit obedience to parents and private punishments, when he was of an age to be subject to the jurisdiction of the laws, and that 'the barbarous cruelty of allowing parents to imprison their children, to prevent their contaminating their noble blood by following the dictates of nature when they chose to marry, or for any misdemeanor that does not come under the cognizance of public justice', was one of the most arbitrary violations of liberty.⁵⁹ That parents prevented their children from making unsuitable marriages was artificial affection, the spurious offspring of mistaken pride, and far removed from natural parental affection. That the property of

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

younger children had been sacrificed to the eldest son was a consequence of a 'barbarous feudal institution'.⁶⁰ This kind of family with false affection was Burke's version of the family, and it embodied the ideology of the aristocratic stage of society and of oppression. True happiness would not arise from such a family and society. To Wollstonecraft, true happiness arose from the friendship and intimacy which could 'only be enjoyed by equals'.⁶¹

While Burke was proud of British history and European civilization and afraid that these would collapse because of the French Revolution, Wollstonecraft regarded western civilization, given birth to by the Enlightenment thinkers and the Revolution, as still in its infancy. The spirit of romance and chivalry was on the wane, and reason and human rights would gain by its extinction.⁶² Burke's civilization was incomplete, for it cultivated manners at the expense of morals and virtues. Thus, she defended the French Revolution as the first step towards true civilization.

The progress of civilization according to Wollstonecraft was the improvement of every single man's life:

The happiness of the whole must arise from the happiness of the constituent part, or the essence of justice is sacrificed to a supposed grand arrangement. And that may be good for the whole of a creature's existence, that disturbs the comfort of a small portion.⁶³

And

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, P. 39.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

If a society was regulated on a more enlarged plan; if man was contented to be the friend of man, and did not seek to bury the sympathies of humanity in the servile appellation of master; if, turning his eyes from ideal regions of taste and elegance, he laboured to give the earth he inhabited all the beauty it is capable of receiving, and was ever on the watch to shed abroad all the happiness which human nature can enjoy; - he who, respecting the rights of men, wishes to convince or persuade society that this is true happiness and dignity, is not the cruel *oppressor* of the poor, nor a short-sighted philosopher ...⁶⁴

Accordingly, equality was the necessary prerequisite for the development of the human capacity of reason and virtue, and of true feelings. She maintained that the artificial systems of manners in the *ancien régime* prevented the improvement of virtue and, thus, of civilization. Only when a society had been reconstructed on the basis of equality, was the happiness of the majority realized, and was the progress of civilization possible. Wollstonecraft, rather naively, therefore, believed that the French Revolution would, in a series of political movements, remove social injustice and misery and attain the utopia sketched out by the radicals.

C. Wollstonecraft's French Revolution after 1793

By the summer of 1792, Wollstonecraft, in publishing the two *Vindications*,⁶⁵ had established herself as a writer of original ideas and deep feelings. Few women before her had written about politics and human rights for both sexes. Certainly, she was ridiculed by some conservatives: Horace Walpole described Wollstonecraft as 'a

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-5.

⁶⁵ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790), and Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).

hyena in petticoats',⁶⁶ and Hannah More, agreeing with Walpole, as has been argued in Chapter 1, refused to bother herself to read Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792).⁶⁷ Nevertheless, she was well received by the circle of radicals in London. This circle included Mary Hays, Elizabeth Inchbald, William Godwin, Thomas Paine and Dr. Joseph Priestley.⁶⁸

By midsummer 1792, many of Wollstonecraft's radical friends, such as Harry Priestley (son of Dr. Joseph Priestley), James Watt (son of the inventor), Thomas Cooper, Thomas Christie, Thomas Holcroft, the poet, William Wordsworth, and Samuel Rogers, had already visited Revolutionary France and tasted the revolutionary way of life. Wollstonecraft, Joseph Johnson and Henry Fuseli, had agreed to make a trip to Paris together at this time.⁶⁹ Yet, when the party arrived at Dover in September 1792, there was news of upheavals taking place in France. Visiting France at this time might bring them into danger. Wollstonecraft's two companions decided to return to London, and thus this trip was ended in 13 September.⁷⁰ The Jacobins, led by Robespierre and Marat among others, had overwhelmed the Girondins by the middle of 1792, and they conducted a violent campaign against all moderates, constitutionalists and former monarchists, with the help of the Paris sans-culottes. The

⁶⁶ Horace Walpole, *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Fourth Earl of Oxford*, ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee (16 vols., Oxford, 1903), xv, p. 337.

⁶⁷ Anne Stott, *Hannah More: The First Victorian* (Oxford, 2003), p. 217.

⁶⁸ Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (2nd edn., London, 1992), pp. 142-55.

⁶⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft to Everina Wollstonecraft, London, 20 June 1792, in Mary Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Ralph M. Wardle (Ithaca, 1979), p. 213.

⁷⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft to Everina Wollstonecraft, 14 September 1792, in *ibid.*, p. 214.

news of the September Massacres in Paris produced doubts and revulsion among many British sympathizers; as Claire Tomalin indicates, '[William] Cowper despaired of the revolutionary cause now, Blake laid aside his red cap of liberty and Anna Seward, the perfect barometer of middle-class opinion, announced that she found Burke more persuasive than she had done at first reading'.⁷¹ Yet, Wollstonecraft wrote to her friend, William Roscoe:

Mean time let me beg you not to mix with the shallow herd who throw an odium on immutable principles, because some of the mere instrument of the revolution were too sharp. – Children of any growth will do mischief when they meddle with edged tools. It is to be lamented that *as yet* the billows of public opinion are only to be moved forward by the strong wind, the squally gusts of passion.⁷²

A general aversion to the Revolution had spread throughout Britain after the fall of monarchy in France in August 1792 and the following September Massacres. Wollstonecraft, however, remained optimistic about the Revolution and she determined to set out for Paris alone.

Thus, she left for Paris on 8 December 1792 with the aim of writing an account of the Revolution for British readers. As soon as she arrived, she found that Paris was very different from what she had expected. Commenting in London, she had tried to rationalize the chaos brought about by the Revolution, sympathized with the grievances of the French people while commending the principles of the Revolution

⁷¹ Tomalin, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, p. 153.

⁷² Mary Wollstonecraft to William Roscoe, London, 12 November 1792, in Wollstonecraft, *Collected Letters*, p. 218.

against the *ancien régime*. Nonetheless, in her letter to Joseph Johnson, on 26 December 1792, her account of her Paris experience was filled with horror at the turbulence and bloodshed:

I have been alone ever since; and, though my mind is calm, I cannot dismiss the lively images that have filled my imagination all the day. – Nay, do not smile, but pity me; for, once or twice, lifting my eyes from the paper, I have seen eyes glare through a glass-door opposite my chair, and bloody hands shook at me. Not the distant sound of a footstep can I hear. – My apartments are remote from those of the servants, the only persons who sleep with me in an immense hotel...I wish I had even kept the cat with me! – I want to see something alive; death in so many frightful shapes has taken hold of my fancy. – I am going to bed – and, for the first time in my life, I cannot put out the candle.⁷³

In November, while still in London, she had dismissed the violence of the Jacobins and the sans-culottes in her letter to Roscoe. Now, as a witness to events in Paris, she was forced to reconsider her preconceived ideas. She felt horror and had nightmare-like visions in her mind. She saw Louis XVI pass down the street to attend his trial ‘with more dignity than I expected from his character, in a hackney coach going to meet death’.⁷⁴ Admitting the cruelty of the Jacobins’ campaign and the ignorant populace, she predicted the death of the king.

During her stay at Paris, moreover, she met other British and American expatriates such as Helen Maria Williams, Joel Barlow, Thomas Paine and Thomas Christie.⁷⁵ Then she was introduced to the leading Girondins, including Brissot, the

⁷³ Mary Wollstonecraft to Joseph Johnson, Paris, 26 December 1792, in *Ibid.*, p. 227

⁷⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft to Joseph Johnson, Paris, 26 December 1792, in *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁷⁵ See Tomalin, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, pp. 156-65.

Rolands, Pétion, Vergniaud, and others.⁷⁶ Tomalin suggests that Wollstonecraft found their political principles more moderate and agreeable than those of the Montagnards, and Wollstonecraft believed that the Girondins supported religious toleration, sympathized with women's advancement, and were concerned with social questions.⁷⁷ Moving in such circles, her ideas of the Revolution were directly influenced by them. As friend of the Girondins, like other British radicals such as Helen Maria Williams, she wanted to believe the Girondins were moderates rather than radical revolutionaries. But the Girondins were indeed radical, though not fanatical. They compelled Louis XVI to give up the throne, forced the declaration of the war against Habsburg Austria, and stirred up popular passion, yet let the sans-culottes out of control. The Girondins tried to distance themselves from the September Massacres, and they seemed successful. As we can see, at least, these British radicals blamed the Montagnards for every violent element of the Revolution. Wollstonecraft and British radicals were similar to the Girondins in some respects. Both supported reform, popular rights, rational philosophy and the Revolution. Furthermore, Both were groups of theorists, but not good politicians when it came to putting ideas into practice.

On 21 January 1793 Louis XVI was executed. The declaration of war on Britain

⁷⁶ See *ibid.*, pp. 172-7.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 171-2.

on 1 February, the revolts in the Vendée, and the ruthless suppression by the Republicans, of other political crises, were all serious blows to British expatriates and sympathizers with the Revolution in Britain. Wollstonecraft herself could no longer retain her optimism that the Revolution would progress to a golden age of pure democracy. As she put it,

Before I came to France, I cherished, you know, an opinion, that strong virtues might exist with the polished manners produced by the progress of civilization; and I even anticipated the epoch, when, in the course of improvement, men would labour to become virtuous, without being goaded on by misery. But now, the perspective of the golden age, fading before the attentive eye of observation, almost eludes my sight, and, losing thus in part my theory of a more perfect state, start not, my friend, if I bring forward an opinion, which at the first glance seems to be levelled against the existence of God! I am not become an Atheist, I assure you, by residing at Paris: yet I begin to fear that vice, or, if you will, evil, is the grand mobile of action ...⁷⁸

She still supported Revolutionary ideals, but her reflections on historical progress and political reform by the methods of revolution became melancholic. She wrote:

I would ... first inform you that, out of the chaos of vices and follies, prejudices and virtues, rudely jumbled together, I saw the fair form of Liberty slowly rising, and Virtue expending her wings to shelter all her children! I should then hear the account of the barbarities that have rent the bosom of France patiently, and bless the firm hand that lopt off the rotten limbs. But, if the aristocracy of birth is leveled with the ground, only to make room for that of riches, I am afraid that the morals of the people will not be much improved by the change, or the government rendered less venal.⁷⁹

A new ruling class was emerging. Wollstonecraft witnessed the rise of the bourgeoisie

⁷⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, 'Letter on the Present Character of the French Nation', Paris, 15 February 1793, in Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler (7 vols., London, 1989), vi, p. 444-5.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

as the ruling elite in the French Revolution and feared the inimical results of this phenomenon. For her, the Revolution had changed only the form and the name but not the French way of thinking. Political power was still held in the hands of certain people. The majority did not care about politics. Thus, as she wrote, 'the turn of the tide has left the dregs of the old system to corrupt the new. For the same pride of offices, the same desire of power are still visible'.⁸⁰ The ruling camp abused their position and social grievances remained.

'Letter on the Present Character of the French Nation' served as a prologue to her later work, *An History and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the Effect It Has Produced in Europe* (1794). Visiting France in the midst of the Revolution's most violent period, she found that Paris was a slaughterhouse full of terror of the guillotine and many of her Girondist friends were executed. Nonetheless, Wollstonecraft kept her belief in the French Revolution as a positive step forward in the civilizing process. She wondered how and why this Revolution had gone wrong in France and thought about ways in which the Revolutionary principles could become fulfilled in human society in her work, *An History and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*. While many British supporters of the French Revolution abandoned their faith during the

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 446.

Terror, such as James Mackintosh and William Wordsworth, Wollstonecraft, residing in Paris, took pains to review and defend the Revolution and insisted on the truth of her arguments in *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*, which genuine civilization began with the universal diffusion of happiness and liberty. According to Furniss's argument, Wollstonecraft doubted that the change of political system would bring social progress efficiently.⁸¹ Moreover, as Janet Todd stresses, *A History and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution* disclosed an almost Burkean fear of political chaos or control by the vulgar and stupid.⁸² But she retained her belief that democratic ideals emerging from the Revolution were fundamental elements of a just and virtuous society.

In her preface, Wollstonecraft began to try to convince her readers that the Revolution, though chaotic and violent, would be progressive in the long term towards the state of reason, justice and liberty: 'The rapid changes, the violent, the base, and nefarious assassinations, which have clouded the vivid prospect that began to spread a ray of joy and gladness over the gloomy horizon of oppression, cannot fail to chill the sympathizing bosom, and palsy intellectual vigour'.⁸³ Wollstonecraft, like many radicals, explained that the radical inequality that prevailed in France and the

⁸¹ Furniss, 'Mary Wollstonecraft's French Revolution', p. 68.

⁸² Janet Todd, 'Introduction', in Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men; A Vindication of the Rights of Woman; An Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution*, ed. Janet Todd (Oxford, 1999), p. xxvii.

⁸³ Mary Wollstonecraft, *An History and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the Effect It Has Produced in Europe*, in Wollstonecraft, *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, vi, p. 6.

corruptions of the *ancien régime* were the main reasons for the excesses of the Revolution and the subsequent Terror. The result was gloomy and lamentable, yet predictable. As Daniel O'Neill points out, many have simply suggested that those who supported the French Revolution were defenders of the Terror, because terror and tyranny were the consequences of such a innovative revolution: 'This has been perhaps the favourite arrow in conservative quivers from Burke onward, and it has taken many a radical casualty'.⁸⁴ To Burke, since the revolutionaries provoked popular revolts during the course of the Revolution and used violence as an crucial means to gain political power, violence must then become the consequence of the Revolution. Modern historian Simon Schama uses the same argument in his work, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution*.⁸⁵ In fact, violence had been a political tool whether in the hands of the Girondins or of the Montagnards. It was one of the characteristics of the Revolution, he alleges. Moreover, while both Burke and Wollstonecraft agreed that democratic equality was the main principle of the Revolution, in Burke's *Reflections* and post-*Reflections* writings he viewed this egalitarian Revolution and the advent of political democracy as a process leading to the decline of civilization into savagery. The anarchic political reality of France in the 1790s had proved that the Revolution was the great evil of his time. But in *An History*

⁸⁴ O'Neill, *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate*, p. 232.

⁸⁵ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 2004).

and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution Wollstonecraft refuted Burke's argument. Instead, she argued that the Terror was a predictable consequence of the injustice and inequality of the *ancien régime*. 'The character of the French', Wollstonecraft argued, had been 'so depraved by the inveterate despotism of ages, that even amidst the heroism which distinguished the taking of the Bastille, we are forced to see that suspicious temper, and that vain ambition of dazzling, which generated all the succeeding follies and crimes.'⁸⁶ She did not judge violence and chaos as fatal consequences of the Revolution; instead, she thought these were necessary phenomena. She revealed her faith in democracy, in rationalism and in historical progress: more democracy, with 'the harbinger of reason',⁸⁷ was the only path to a just and liberal society and would lead the Revolution to a positive end in the long term.

In addition, she ascribed an 'effeminate' character to the French due to the same political causes. The effeminacy, vanity, and frivolity of the French people were common claims in eighteenth-century Britain. Following her arguments of the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* that women's morality was seriously influenced by long established inequalities, most of the French, too, were accustomed to polite customs, and thought only of 'how to please and be pleased'.⁸⁸ She agreed with

⁸⁶ Wollstonecraft, *French Revolution*, p. 123.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

⁸⁸ Chris Jones, 'The *Vindications* and their Political Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary*

Burke that Marie Antoinette represented the manners of the *ancien régime*. Burke described the Queen as a civilized lady and tender mother. In contrast, the manners of Marie Antoinette, for Wollstonecraft, were artificial, insincere, selfish and immoral, and had permeated the French national character. In addition, the system of the *ancien régime* led to the pervasively theatrical character of the majority of people in all aspects of life: ‘Their national character is, perhaps, more formed by their theatrical amusements, than is generally imagined: they are in reality the schools of vanity. And, after this kind of education, is it surprising, that almost every thing is said and done for stage effect?’⁸⁹ Lacking the proper cultivation of minds and feelings, Wollstonecraft continued, the French character exhibited insincerity and weakness, which was fatal to the Revolution. Therefore, as Chris Jones indicates, ‘Wollstonecraft shared the view of Helen Maria Williams that the French were advancing not too far but too fast’.⁹⁰ Though founded on correct principles, the Revolution was deemed to have failed. Although the *ancien régime* made this Revolution necessary, to Wollstonecraft, the French were ‘NOT PROPERLY QUALIFIED FOR THE REVOLUTION’ (emphasis in original).⁹¹

For Wollstonecraft, Revolutionary violence showed how the poor had for ages lived under the tyranny of the privileged, and how the privileged had taught them how

Wollstonecraft, p. 54.

⁸⁹ Wollstonecraft, *French Revolution*, p. 25.

⁹⁰ Jones, ‘The *Vindications* and their Political Tradition’, p. 55.

⁹¹ The subtitle of Wollstonecraft, *French Revolution*, ch. 4, p. 223.

to act when they came to possess power: ‘People are rendered ferocious by misery; and misanthropy is ever the offspring of discontent.’⁹² Yet, Revolutionary violence also proved that the French character had been malformed under the influence of the *ancien régime*. Wollstonecraft wondered, ‘How can we expect to see men live together like brothers, when we see only master and servant in society?’⁹³ The overthrow of the monarchy was the right direction towards civilization, but it was not suited to the state of the French people’s self-knowledge. She ascribed the failure of the Revolution to internal moral and social causes. ‘From implicitly obeying their sovereigns’, as Wollstonecraft explained, ‘the [F]rench became suddenly all sovereigns’.⁹⁴ ‘The depravity of the higher class, and the ignorance of the lower respecting practical political science’,⁹⁵ rendered them both incapable of achieving the great objects of the Revolution.

Despite all the obstacles and the chaotic situation, Wollstonecraft expressed her faith in the improvement of knowledge and progress of true civilization, on the basis of democratic equality, in the longer term:

I feel confident of being able to prove, that the people are essentially good, and that knowledge is rapidly advancing to that degree of perfectibility, when the proud distinctions of sophisticating fools will be eclipsed by the mild rays of philosophy, and man be considered as man –

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

acting with the dignity of a intelligent being.⁹⁶

The effeminacy of the French character and the courtly manners of the frivolous, vain and sensual would eventually be destroyed by the cultivation of intellectual curiosity and patriotism based on the rights of all human beings. ‘The progress of reason’ was gradual and so it is advisable for France to ‘advance the simplification of [its] political system, in a manner best adapted to the state of improvement of the understanding of the nation.’⁹⁷ Wollstonecraft maintained, because ‘the sudden change which had happened in France, from the most fettering tyranny to an unbridled liberty’, made it ‘morally impossible’ to expect anything could be managed peacefully and with the wisdom of experience.⁹⁸ She still emphasized, in spite of all obstructions, that democratization was synonymous with the civilizing process itself,⁹⁹ and that such a Revolution, on the basis of democracy, would bring about a gradual and beneficial change in the people’s education and in their character in the long term, and ‘the fruit of their liberty’ which would ripen gradually.¹⁰⁰

D. Wollstonecraft’s Reflections on the French Revolution while in Scandinavia

Taking along her surviving hopes for the Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft went to Scandinavia in the summer of 1795. In her *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), a travelogue mixed with emotional

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 212-13.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 213.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

outbursts and political observations, as we have seen above in Chapter 1, she revealed her abiding concern with the impact of the political changes upon the entire society.

Two typical features of modern society – commerce and industry - worried Wollstonecraft. Her criticism of the effects of these two shows her ambivalent feelings towards modernization: she anticipated human progress, but she feared the results of industrialization, which was far beyond her speculation. Basically, she agreed that commerce could encourage independence and equality, because the wages that men earned emancipated them from slavish dependence on a feudal lord or the servile receipt of alms from the rich. In Norway, she also insisted that, when all men and women were employed with fair mercantile profits which were sufficient to reward their industry, ‘while none are so great as to permit the possessor to remain idle’, a state of independence and virtue could be expected.¹⁰¹ Otherwise, the ‘want of proportion between profit and labour’ debased men into a dependent state which was detrimental to the improvement of civilization.¹⁰² Yet, Chris Jones stresses that, Wollstonecraft condemned the system of commerce and industry and maintained that the system turned men into ‘unthinking, unprogressive automatons to make fortunes for individuals’.¹⁰³ In her last work on the French Revolution she worried about the

¹⁰¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), reprinted in Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and Memoirs of the Author of the ‘Rights of Woman’*, ed. Richard Holmes (London, 1987), p. 120.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹⁰³ Jones, ‘The *Vindications* and their Political Tradition’, p. 53.

rising new ruling class, the bourgeoisie. She thought the Terror had been created in the hands of these ambitious, selfish and cold-blooded men. Now, what distressed Wollstonecraft during the course of her Scandinavian tour was that she perceived that the bourgeoisie was also emerging in northern Europe. The 'tyranny of wealth',¹⁰⁴ in the words of Wollstonecraft, exploited the common people and was even less merciful than the aristocracy.¹⁰⁵ As we can see, she appeared to have foreseen the harm caused by capitalism and stressed not only political and gender equality, but also social equality. She pointed out the problem, but she did not find a better solution than returning to the state of small farms, independent yeomen and family-based manufacturing.

Although Wollstonecraft became disillusioned with Revolutionary practices in France, her experience in Scandinavia reawakened her optimism about the improvement and progress of humankind. In Sweden, she found that the French Revolution had not only made royalty more cautious, but had so 'decreased every where a respect for nobility', and the peasantry 'have not only lost their blind reverence for their seigniors, but complain, in a manly style, of oppressions which before they did not think of denominating such, because they were taught to consider

¹⁰⁴ Wollstonecraft, *A Short Residence*, p. 150.

¹⁰⁵ Wollstonecraft took the society of England and America as examples: 'England and America owe their liberty to commerce, which created a new species of power to undermine the feudal system. But let them beware of the consequence; the tyranny of wealth is still more galling and debasing than that of rank.' *Ibid.*, p. 150.

themselves as a different order of beings'.¹⁰⁶ Norway, a country subject to Denmark, instead of an enslaved province, seemed to her the freest community she had ever observed. Their landed property was distributed in small farms, which had produced a degree of equality; the wealthy merchants divided their personal fortune amongst their children; local governments were responsive to democratic forces, and thus 'they have no time to learn to be tyrants', said a gentleman she met on her trip. She was told that the previous year a man, who abused his power, was 'cashiered'.¹⁰⁷ In another district of Norway, the small villages provoked in her the idea of 'the golden age': yeomen with small farms, with simple honest characters, revealed the quality of 'independence and virtue; affluence without vice; cultivation of mind, without depravity of heart; with "ever smiling liberty", the nymph of the mountain.'¹⁰⁸ In her journeys, therefore, she saw that Revolutionary theories had begun to reveal positive potential for the development of civilization in other European countries. Although there were many imperfections, she believed that, with proper education and the development of civilization, the cultivation of arts and science would follow,¹⁰⁹ and people and governments would grow to maturity according to the natural pace of each particular nation.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 101-2. This and the next quotations again show that Wollstonecraft wanted to return to the state of small farms and family-like manufacturing, rather than the age of commercialism with industrial factories.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹⁰⁹ Wollstonecraft stressed the importance of the cultivation of arts and sciences several times in *A Short Residence*. See *ibid.*, p. 73, 93, 103, 121, 141.

Wollstonecraft wrote in the Appendix to *A Short Residence* that it was because of these evils that reformers wanted a hurried reform or violent revolution in order to destroy the evils quickly.¹¹⁰ Such actions were, however, mistaken. She wrote:

An ardent affection for the human race makes enthusiastic characters eager to produce alterations in laws and governments prematurely. To render them useful and permanent, they must be the growth of each particular soil, and the gradual fruit of the ripening understanding of the nation, matured by times, not forced by an unnatural fermentation. And, to convince me that such a change is gaining ground, with accelerating pace, the view I have had of society, during my northern journey, would have been sufficient ...¹¹¹

Wollstonecraft achieved a new level of consciousness regarding the impact of the French Revolution on enlightened civil society. She acknowledged that revolutionary change accelerated human progress at an ‘unnatural’ pace, which forced new governments and laws onto an inadequately prepared society. It was therefore more effective to carry out progressive reforms that were suited to the particular soil of each nation; then the fruits of social reform would ripen gradually. It appears that Wollstonecraft, in her last work, contributed to her favourite subject: ‘the future improvement of the world’.¹¹² She agreed partly with Burke that progressive reform, instead of ‘unnatural’ revolution, was the best way of encouraging social progress. Although Wollstonecraft’s political philosophy was getting nearer to that of Burke, their philosophy of politics and civilization remained fundamentally different. Burke

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Appendix.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, Appendix.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 187.

was strongly opposed to the French Revolution, which introduced a new system of democratic manners and democratic politics, the elements of which would devastate human civilization. His moral and political philosophy had defended the gradual historical development of all societies. For Wollstonecraft, Burke's social orders were the result of inequality and false sensibility. Democracy was the basis of true human civilization. Wollstonecraft still believed in the potential benefits of the Revolutionary principles and her support for the democratic theories of her *Vindications* never changed during her lifetime.

CHAPTER 4

THE REVOLUTION CONTROVERSY (I): 1789-1792

A. Introduction to ‘The Revolution Controversy’: 1789-1802

We have seen Wollstonecraft’s political responses to Burke and her debate on the Revolution controversy in Chapter 3. Now from Chapter 4 to Chapter 7, we move on to discuss other British women travellers’ political arguments on the subject of ‘the Revolution controversy’ in the Revolutionary age. Most of them responded directly to the political opinions of Burke and Wollstonecraft. Thus, I shall take Burke and Wollstonecraft’s debate, as was discussed in Chapter 3, as the central theme in order to discuss chronologically the British women travellers’ political responses to the Revolution controversy. Before 1792 these two camps were equally matched. However, when the Revolution degenerated into Terror and wars, the Burkean view became the main strand of British women travellers’ political thinking.

The great events of the Revolutionary era heightened British people’s political awareness at the end of eighteenth century and the beginning of nineteenth century. Those who travelled to the Continent, both men and women, whether well-known or unknown, considered it their responsibility to involve themselves in contemporary political, social and educational problems and act as political commentators or journalists. Generally speaking, their political opinions were influenced by Burke’s

Reflections published in 1790, and they often responded to, or argued with him, in their travel writings as we have seen. From 1789 to 1802, their political thinking also gradually developed in a more pragmatic, if not exactly conservative, manner in response to the Terror and the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Between the years 1790 and 1802, a few British men and women continued to visit France with political enthusiasm and experienced the events at first hand. As T. F. Hill, who made a journey to France during the autumn of 1791, wrote in the opening paragraph of his *Observations on the Politics of France* (1792):

Travellers who formerly visited France, either to investigate living manners, or explore the remains of former times; nay, even that less meditating race, who went thither in search of mere amusement; have all had their attention turned at present in that country, to the study of politics; a study which they almost find necessary, to secure their personal safety: and the same motives that have induced others, incited me also to observe the various phenomena presented by the intellectual volcano, now in eruption there.¹

The French Revolution heightened people's political awareness, and thus 'the study of politics' became the most important subject of all in their travel writings. 'Living manners', 'remains of former times', and 'amusement' were no longer the central planks in the experience of travel in France. The travellers of the 1790s supplied their eyewitness accounts not only as journalists, but also as political commentators. Their writings were in dialogue with other contemporary polemical texts stimulated by the

¹ T. F. Hill, *Observations on the Politics of France, and their Progress since the last Summer: made in a Journey from Spa to Paris during the autumn of 1791* (London, 1792), p. 1.

French Revolution. As I have suggested in Chapter 3, a serious public debate on political principles and on the process of human civilization was thus stirred in the 1790s following the publication of the major works of Price, Burke, Wollstonecraft and Paine, among others, and this 'Revolution controversy' was also reflected in women's travel writing in the 1790s and 1800s.

The power of educated women should not be underestimated in this period. On 18 November 1792, fifty radical British and Irish expatriates, who remained sympathizers with the French Revolution, such as Thomas Paine and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, gathered at a political dinner at White's Hotel in Paris to celebrate the progress of liberty and the victories of the French armies.² As Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke stress, 'Of the thirteen toasts which the British Club drank that evening, two specifically acknowledged the contributions of women, British and French, to the French Revolution and to the liberty':

- (11) [to] the Women of Great Britain, particularly those who have distinguished themselves by their writings in favour of the French revolution, Mrs. [Charlotte] Smith and Miss H. M. Williams;
- (12) [to] the Women of France, especially those who have had the courage to take up arms to defend the cause of liberty, *citoyennes* Fernig, Anselm, &c.³

These two toasts which celebrated women's contributions to the Revolution through their writings and through their public activism indicated the extent of involvement by

² See Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke, 'British Women Writers and the French Revolution, 1789-1815', in *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, ed. Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke (Albany, 2001), p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

women writers in this dramatic historical moment.

In Edmund Burke's letter to an anonymous author of a pamphlet entitled *A Comparison of the Opinions of Mr Burke and Monsr Rousseau* (1791) in January 1791, Burke denied that he had ever read Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Men*, which had been sent to his home.⁴ None the less, Burke had been aware of the influence of Wollstonecraft and of many other politically active women. His letter to Mrs. John Crewe in August 1795 provided an observation of radical women's contribution to the Revolution in Britain and in Europe and, somehow, responded to the toasts of the British Club on 18 November 1792:

I hope and supplicate, that all provident and virtuous Wives and Mothers of families, will employ all the just influence they posses over their Husbands and Children, to save themselves and their families from the ruin that the Mesdames de Staals [*sic*] and the Mesdames Rolands, and the Mesdames de Sillery, and the Mrs. Helen Maria Williams, and the Woolstencrofts [*sic*] &c &c &c &c &c and all that Clan of desperate, Wicked, and mischievously ingenious Women, who have brought, or are likely to bring Ruin and shame upon all those that listen to them. You ought to make their very names odious to your children. The Sex has much influence. Let the honest and prudent save us from the Evils with which we are menaced by the daring, the restless, and the unprincipled.⁵

Burke had described the French Revolution and the political philosophy of the Revolution as the 'evils' of his time ever since his *Reflections*. He wanted his female friend to be wary of Wollstonecraft and *many* - as he put '&c' five times - other

⁴ Edmund Burke, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. Thomas W. Copeland (10 vols., Chicago, 1958-78), viii, pp. 214-15.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

women writers and thinkers who were 'evil' supporters of the French Revolution and were highly influential in British society. Thus, British women and future generations should be more conscious of the power of these evil women because the democratic project of these British Jacobins would pollute the minds of Britons, undermine traditional social order, and destroy western civilization.

Up to the middle of 1792, enthusiasm for the Revolution was commonplace among educated British middle-class people, especially Protestant dissenters. The radicals and Protestant dissenters in Britain, although they constituted only 7% of the population, were a powerful force for modernization, transformation in and critiques of the status quo at this period. British radicals and Protestant dissenters attacked the traditional order and regarded the Revolution as the fulfilment of Enlightenment ideals of liberty and equality. They held optimistic views about the Revolution and expected that it would speedily bring an end to all feudal governments across Europe.

Although the voices of reform and change were loud in the late 1780s and early 1790s, and heroic efforts were made by radicals and dissenters in the development of political ideology and plans for the progress of society, the majority of the population had supported the traditional values and the established order, and many of those who had previously supported the French Revolution changed their political attitudes during the Terror and the Napoleonic wars. Historian H. T. Dickinson has suggested

that '[t]he "Terror" in France and the outbreak of war in 1793 undoubtedly made it more difficult to persuade the propertied classes that political reforms were necessary, but it is difficult to believe that the radicals had any chance of implementing their proposals at any time in the late eighteenth century.'⁶ The radicals were idealists and theorists. They criticized the status quo, analyzed the problems, admired Enlightenment thinking, and supported the Revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality, yet what theories they proposed were varied and sometimes unrealistic. As Dickinson maintains, 'the reformers agreed on very little except the need for a more equal representation of the people, that they never developed the organizations, strategies, or tactics capable of bringing irresistible pressure to bear upon the governing élite, and that they failed to rally the majority of either the middling or the lower orders behind their political demands.'⁷ Indeed, most of the fearless women who visited France at this time were supporters either of parliamentary reform or of democratic ideals. In observations made during their travels, their opinions about future government, political and social policies were diverse, except for 'the need for a more equal representation of the people'.

Dickinson also stresses that there was a widespread recognition in Britain of the

⁶ H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1977), p. 270.

⁷ H. T. Dickinson, 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford, 1990), p. 503.

benefits provided by the existing British constitution: 'There was a very popular and pervasive belief that British liberties and British prosperity were the product of parliamentary monarchy, the rule of law, and the existing social order. This conviction made many ordinary people quite resistant to the arguments for change put forward by radicals at home and revolutionaries abroad.'⁸ As we shall see, while most women travellers felt satisfied with the existing order, those who had been more open to change and reform began to betray a feeling of pessimism about the fate of the Revolution after they witnessed the violence and anarchy in France. No matter how they explained Revolutionary violence and terror, their deeply-felt disgust was revealed in their writings. The Revolution was identified as an improper way to bring the ideals of the Enlightenment to fruition; education and gradual reform came to be regarded as the best way to carry out democratic ideals. Most important of all, most women travellers, whether royalists, conservatives, or the supporters of the Opposition Whigs, due to their experiences in France, reasserted that the British constitution was the most stable and dependable system which had held firm for centuries against the opposing forces of tyranny or anarchy.

B. The Revolution Controversy (I): 1789-1792

This chapter focuses on British women travellers' political responses to 'the

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 504-5.

Revolution controversy' from 1789 to 1792. It will discuss three kinds of British women in France during this period: first, royalists and conservatives who by chance were in France at the time of the fall of Bastille, such as Grace Dalrymple Elliott and Martha Swinburne. They were shocked by both the ideals and the actions of the revolutionaries. Second, upper-class women, such as Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and her sister Henrietta Frances, Countess of Bessborough, who supported Whiggish reform and Charles James Fox. As close friends of Marie Antoinette and royal family, however, they feared the threat of the French Revolution, and they realized that the Revolutionary methods, which had brought violence and destruction, were contrary to their Whiggish ideas. As Amanda Foreman suggests, although their political ideology stressed their love for the liberties of the people, they were not democrats like Paine and Wollstonecraft, whose egalitarian theories contradicted the Whig orthodoxy that the ordained role of the aristocracy was to maintain the stability of government and to protect the liberty of the people. Foreman argues that they were against the court and wished to reduce the power of the king, but it was very different from the struggle of the establishment versus the people in the French Revolution, which swept aside all tradition and the established orders.⁹ In my view, Georgiana and her sister's idea of reform was similar to that of Burke.

⁹ Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, 1999), p. 288.

The third and final group was political radicals, who often came from a dissenting background, such as the famous Helen Maria Williams and Mary Wollstonecraft. They were educated middle-class women and they had approached radicalism through Protestant dissent and the philosophy of the Enlightenment. Although they were described by contemporaries as ‘Jacobin’, they thought their political ideology was not as close to Montagnards, such as Danton, Marat and Robespierre, as it was to Girondins, such as Brissot, Pétion, the Rolands and Vergniaud. After the outbreak of the French Revolution, these radical women sympathized with what was occurring in France and some were eager to witness these events directly.

1. Perspective from the Conservatives

Charlotte West (d. 1821) settled with her husband in Chalons-sur-Marne, France in 1787 in order to benefit from lower costs of living. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the details of her life are not known, except for her travel journal, *A Ten Years' Residence in France, during the Severest Part of the Revolution, from the Year 1787 to 1797, Containing Various Anecdotes of Some of the Most Remarkable Personages of that Period* (1821). Yet, because nothing further is known of the author's life, we do not know how far this travel journal was

fictionalized.¹⁰ Apparently, she wrote down her personal experiences as ‘a bodily sufferer under the rigorous measures of a Revolutionary Government’ in order to warn Britain of the horror of the Revolution.¹¹ On hearing of the destruction of the Bastille, she rejoiced.¹² Like many British people at this time, she apparently thought the French had followed the example of British liberty, which was rooted in the principles of personal liberty and limited government proclaimed by Magna Carta and which was further affirmed during the Glorious Revolution. Like many British people at this moment, she anticipated the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in France. Her delight in the Revolution did not last long, however. Witnessing the royal return from the flight to Varennes in June 1791 and the destruction brought by the violent fédérés of Marseille, who believed themselves to be the voice of the new nation, she believed this Revolution would not bring ‘Liberty’ and ‘Reform’.¹³

Grace Dalrymple Elliott (1754?–1823) followed the Duke of Orleans, cousin of Louis XVI, to Paris probably in 1786 and resided in France during the crucial years of the French Revolution. She was a Scottish courtesan and had been renowned in high society for her beauty and she had been mistress to Lords Cholmondeley and the Prince

¹⁰ See Jonathan David Gross, ‘West, Charlotte’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/articleHL/70515?anchor=match>>. As Gross puts it, ‘The book was published with the assistance of sixty-three subscribers and printed by George Sams, a freemason. It is not known whether West is using a pseudonym, or how far her exploits are fictionalized.’

¹¹ Charlotte West, *A Ten Years' Residence in France, During the Severest Part of the Revolution, from the Year 1787 to 1797, Containing Various Anecdotes of Some of the Most Remarkable Personages of that Period* (London, 1821), p. ii.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

of Wales (later George IV). The Prince of Wales introduced her to the Duke of Orleans, an anglophile, in 1784. The couple began an affair and settled in Paris throughout the Revolution. Her intimacy with Orleans and other aristocrats brought her close to the royal family, and she was a witness of the political machinations of Orleans during the Revolution.¹⁴

Martha Swinburne (*née* Baker, ? - 1809), wife of Henry Swinburne (1743-1806), travelled extensively on the Continent with her husband, received a cordial reception in European courts, and had a close relationship with Marie Antoinette in the 1780s. She was at Versailles with the queen at the outbreak of the Revolution and remained there until the end of 1789. There was ferment in Paris. According to Grace Elliott's reminiscences, from 12 July 1789 many theatres were shut by orders from the police, many people started to take flight, the French Guards and the regiment Royal Allemagne fought on the Boulevards of the Chaussée D'Antin where many cavaliers and horses were killed, and 'the mob were carrying about the streets the busts of the Duke of Orleans and of Necker'.¹⁵ Mrs. Swinburne wrote in 1 July 1789: 'The fermentation seems to be strangely increased; and if it were not for Harry's being here, I would return directly to England ... Yet I am assured there can be no danger for us,

¹⁴ For the biographical information about Grace Dalrymple Elliott, see the preface of her *Journal of My Life during the French Revolution* (London, 1859), pp. ix-xv. See also Martin J. Levy, 'Elliott, Grace', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford, 2004 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8675>.

¹⁵ Elliott, *Journal*, p. 18.

and that the unpopularity of the Court will not affect private individuals.¹⁶ Several disturbances had been witnessed by British travellers everywhere in France on the eve of the French Revolution; they might have sensed that something like a rebellion would happen in the country. Swinburne and Elliott noted nothing about the Revolutionary ideals. For them, from the very beginning, the Revolution was mob violence. Swinburne, especially, could not have anticipated such an extraordinary Revolution that would continue to bring huge reactions in the following decades across the whole of Europe.

The Duke of Orleans took the name Philippe Égalité to indicate his support for the early events of the French Revolution. He later voted for the execution of Louis XVI and stirred a general hatred against Marie Antoinette. In contrast, Elliott had been an outright royalist. In her opinion, the *ancien régime* was the only legitimate regime. She had experienced bloodstained upheavals and chaos even before the attack on the Bastille on 14 July 1789. On the evening of the 14th, the streets were in uproar: ‘the French Guards and all those who were at the taking of the Bastille, were mad drunk, dragging dead bodies and heads and limbs about the streets by torch-light.’¹⁷ Thus, according to her personal experiences, she considered the actions of the early Revolution to be the wicked and barbarous destruction of a nation. In her view,

¹⁶ Mrs. Swinburne to her husband Henry Swinburne, 1 July 1789, in Henry Swinburne, *The Court of Europe at the Close of the Last Century* (2 vols., London, 1895), i, p. 71.

¹⁷ Elliott, *Journal*, p. 33.

nothing could be constructed from this Revolution; to support the Revolution was to approve of the cruelty and violence in France. She did not mention the Revolutionary ideals at all. Elliott had argued with the Duke several times on the topic of the Revolution and had tried to persuade him to side with the monarchy and to offer Louis XVI his services. The Duke once became very angry with her and asked whether she was paid by his enemies to give him such advice.¹⁸

None the less, Elliott spoke up for him, according to her account, by saying that Orleans was not a naturally 'immoral' man. He was duped by the clever people surrounding him, such as Talleyrand, Mirabeau, the Viscount of Noailles, the Duke of Biron, among others. She wrote:

[T]hese were the first who dragged the Duke of Orleans into all the horrors of the Revolution, though many of them forsook him when they saw that he was unfit for their projects. They left him, however, in worse hands than their own; surrounded him with monsters such as Lacos, Merlin de Douay, and others, who never left him till they had plunged him in dishonour, and led him to the scaffold. ... Indeed, the Duke's misfortune was to have been surrounded by ambitious men, who led him to their purpose by degrees, representing everything to him in a favourable light, and hurrying him on till he was so much in their power that he could not recede.¹⁹

From these sentiments, we can also understand that she did not have the least conviction that the Revolution was a way to carry out enlightened ideals.²⁰ Like Burke, Elliott thought that the action of the Revolution was fundamentally false and

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-7.

²⁰ Actually, she never talked about Revolutionary principles or reform ideas in her travel account.

immoral, and the Revolution, if its spread were not arrested, would bring France, or even the whole of Europe, into a state of 'cruel anarchy'.²¹ For them, the Revolution was synonymous with violence, and the revolutionaries were a group of ambitious men who aimed at usurping power, using their call of democracy in order to gain popular support.

Elliott recorded how she acted as an agent for Orleans and for Marie Antoinette, carrying messages to royalist groups, and, on the queen's behalf, to the Austrian government in Brussels in 1790.²² She also wrote down the scenes of horror which she had experienced, such as her concealment of the Marquis de Chansenets, a royalist, at her house during the night so that he could escape the search of Revolutionary guards.²³ She hoped that these personal experiences 'would cure all the admirers of the abominable Revolution'.²⁴ However, Orleans replied to her that 'they were indeed dreadful, but that in all revolutions much blood had been split, and that no stop could be put to it when once begun'.²⁵ Elliott accepted the Duke's explanation of the violent nature of the Revolution, yet she denied the necessity of a violent Revolution at all. She simply did not agree with this action which intended to destroy all existing institutions. For her, it was led by these who only cared about their

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-9.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 52-3.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-96.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

own ambitions, and which caused only terror, chaos and death.

Charlotte West claimed that she had met Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and the dauphin on several occasions at the Maison-de-L'intendance in July 1792. Her memory of the year was inaccurate. The event she described was in fact the flight to Varennes in the early summer of 1791. The queen was described as a melancholy, civilized and beautiful mother and wife. At the dinner held for the royal family, the queen 'looked at her husband, then at her children, and then at the company that surrounded her ... She looked up to heaven, clasped her hands together, but did not speak'. West could not help 'sob[bing] aloud' because of the queen's predicament. On another day, West rescued the dauphin from the arms of Marie Antoinette because West feared that the dauphin was about to be bayoneted by a soldier. The queen, in deep sorrow, came to her in an agony of tears, knowing Charlotte West was an Englishwoman, held both her hands, saying, 'Oh! Madame, madame, what would I give were I and my family in your hospitable country; then should we be safe, and far, far, from this turbulent people, (said she, looking towards the street) for never, oh! Never, shall I be in safety again after this unfortunate day.'²⁶ According to West's description, the royal family were threatened by mobs of thousands, including men, women and children, armed with all sorts of instruments of destruction. At this

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

moment, only British people like her sympathized with the grief of the queen and her family. Thus, she presented herself, as representing the heart of the British, as a natural and humane woman in contrast to the barbarous and unnatural character of the French revolutionaries.

Mary Berry left an entry in her memorandum-book in 1790: 'Summer for three weeks in Montpelier Row. Go abroad in October; winter in Florence and Pisa'; and in the following year, 'After winter between Florence and Pisa, return home in November, take possession of little Strawberry Hill.'²⁷ Robert Berry and his daughters, Mary and Agnes, set off for a tour on the Continent in October 1790, despite the regret of Horace Walpole. Walpole had been sad at the thought of parting with his friends and had been trying to dissuade them from taking a journey at this politically turbulent time.²⁸ Even during their journey, Walpole wrote about sixty letters to Mary Berry in order to inform her of the hazardous situation in France and across Europe and tried to persuade all of them to return home. Arriving at Paris, on 15 October 1790, Mary Berry noticed that the streets of Paris and all places of public resort exhibited 'a very different appearance, and seem filled with very different

²⁷ Mary Berry, *The Berry Papers: being the Correspondence, hitherto unpublished, of Mary and Agnes Berry, 1763-1853*, ed. Lewis Melville (London, 1914), p. 24.

²⁸ See Horace Walpole to Mary Berry, 3 July, 1790, in Mary Berry, *Extracts of the Journals and Correspondence from the Year 1783 to 1852*, ed. Theresa Lewis (3 vols., London, 1865), i, pp. 196-8; Walpole to Berry, 10 July 1790, in *ibid.*, pp. 198-200; Walpole to Berry, 12 July 1790, in *ibid.*, pp. 200-1; Walpole to Berry, 17 July 1790, in *ibid.*, pp. 201-3; Walpole to Berry, 19 July 1790, in *ibid.*, pp. 203-4; Walpole to Berry, 23 July 1790, in *ibid.*, pp. 204-7; Walpole to Berry, 29 July 1790, in *ibid.*, pp. 207-9; Walpole to Berry, 2 August 1790, in *ibid.*, pp. 209-11.

people, from what I remember them five years ago'. The streets were full of 'fiacres and carts', hardly a gentlemen's carriage or a voiture de remises to be seen. She noted: '[T]he Palais Royal and Tuileries filled with people of the lowest class, with a very small proportion of those one can suppose above it.'²⁹

The Berrys visited the National Assembly on 16 October 1790. The quality of the members of National Assembly appeared to Mary Berry much worse than those of the British House of Commons. For her, it was a set of 'shabby, ill-dressed, strange looking people'. The representatives debated and argued loudly together without restraint. They presented only their rage: they 'have destroyed much without having established anything in its place'.³⁰ Writing on 16 October 1790, Berry considered the Revolution as a temporary disorder, and it would soon bring France a better constitution in the British model: When the 'rage for reformation' was over, the aristocratic party would restore power to 'settle a good constitution', 'restore the degraded monarch', and thus 'secure the liberties of the people'.³¹

Unlike those British women who were close to the French royal family, Berry did not perceive the French Revolution in Paris as threatening. Burke's *Reflections* began to alert the British conservatives to the potential danger of the Revolution, but there were still many conservatives did not predict such threat until 1792. Moreover,

²⁹ Berry, i, p. 216.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 218-19.

Berry went to France just before the publication of Burke's *Reflections* in November 1790, and certainly had not read his book during her trip to Paris. Nevertheless, several letters from Walpole, Mrs. Damer and other ladies to Mary Berry mentioned Burke's *Reflections* and praised it as a work of genius. These letters thus mixed the news of the Revolution with Burkean fears of the portents of violence and anarchy as well as the news from England about the debate of the Revolution controversy.³² Berry simply did not sense the potential malign influence of the Revolution at this moment, despite the fact that she was in very close proximity to it.

By the end of August 1791, Berry informed Walpole that they had decided to return home from Florence by way of Bologna, Padua, Verona, Trent, Augsburg, Ulm, Basle and Paris. Walpole was horrified that they were thinking of travelling across disorderly France, and wrote imploring them not to do so.³³ His descriptions of the events in France and the chaotic bloodshed in Paris were full of extreme fear. In Walpole's opinion, the revolutionaries had destroyed civilization in France and now France was in the hands of barbarians. Again, none of the Berrys listened to Walpole's pleading nor did they alter their plans.³⁴ Notwithstanding Walpole's fears for the safety of the Berrys, their journey through France seemed to be accomplished without

³² For example, see Horace Walpole to Mary Berry, 8 Nov 1790, in *ibid.*, pp. 250-4; Walpole to Berry, 17 Dec 1790, in *ibid.*, pp. 265-6; Walpole to Berry, 28 June 1791, in *ibid.*, pp. 308-9; and Walpole to Berry, 17 July 1791, in *ibid.*, pp. 315-18.

³³ Horace Walpole to Mary Berry, 18 September 1791, in *ibid.*, p. 365; Walpole to Berry, 19 September 1791, in *ibid.*, pp. 365-6; Walpole to Berry, 26 September 1791, in *ibid.*, pp. 367-8.

³⁴ Berry, *The Berry Papers*, pp. 72-3.

much danger. The editor of Berry's journal notes that, after the Berrys arrived in Paris on 28 October 1791, during their short stay, Mary Berry's journal 'cease[d]'.³⁵ Some part of the journal may have been destroyed by Mary Berry.³⁶ But neither she nor her friends mentioned any hazardous travel experiences in their letters. They stayed in Paris until 7 November 1791 and then returned to England.³⁷ Therefore, there was no diary entry indicating that she might consider the Revolution as an unbearable evil that had the potential to destroy western civilization.

2. Perspective from the Opposition Whigs

Georgiana Cavendish (*née* Spencer, 1757–1806), Duchess of Devonshire, stayed in France and travelled in Europe with Elizabeth Foster, her confidante and the Duke of Devonshire's mistress, and sometimes also with Georgiana's mother and the Duke, from 20 June 1789 to 18 September 1793. Her sister Henrietta Frances [Harriet], Countess of Bessborough (1761–1821), joined Georgiana's party in Brussels in March 1790, and returned to London in 1794. The two sisters had been interested in political issues and were known for their active roles in Westminster politics in the 1780s. Despite Georgiana's support for the Opposition Whigs and moderate parliamentary reform, her experiences in Revolutionary France forced her to develop different political opinions from Charles James Fox. Her political conflict with the

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 374–5.

Foxite Whigs reflected the internal problems of the Opposition Whigs, which were greatly exacerbated by their inability to unite in their responses to the French Revolution and the French Wars.

Georgiana was well read in history and politics and was influenced by Rousseau's political ideas and the new ideas about women's education.³⁸ She was an enthusiastic Whig and acted as a political hostess in London, gathering a large circle of literary and political figures. Georgiana was especially well-known during the 1784 Westminster Election, when campaigning for the Opposition Whigs, and particularly for her distant cousin, Charles James Fox. Aristocratic society was appalled by the way Georgiana treated voters as if they were her equals. She drove them to the polls in her carriage, visited their homes, shared drinks with them, chatted to voters on the subject of their businesses and families, and argued with them pleasantly.³⁹ Despite the fact that she was often ridiculed in print for her methods of political campaigning, Georgiana was one of the aristocratic women who had a taste for politics and played an influential role in party politics before the French Revolution.⁴⁰ Thus, Frances Burney described Georgiana as the 'head of opposition public'.⁴¹

³⁸ For an introduction to Georgiana's educational background, see Brian Masters, *Georgiana* (London, 1981), pp. 5-9; Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, 1999), pp. 9-10; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2nd edn., London, 2005), pp. 243-4.

³⁹ For the details of Georgiana and the Westminster election campaign of 1784, see Masters, *Georgiana*, pp. 109-42; Foreman, *Georgiana*, ch. 9, 'The Westminster Election: 1784', pp. 136-59; Colley, *Britons*, pp. 242-8.

⁴⁰ See Foreman, *Georgiana*, pp. 136-59, and Colley, *Britons*, pp. 242-50.

⁴¹ Quoted in Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 157.

The Devonshires had planned to visit the Palace of Versailles on 24 June 1789, but ‘the tumults [i]ncrease so much at Versailles that our going w[oul]d be troublesome’.⁴² Days later, the Devonshires eventually visited Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette and the Polignacs at Versailles. Georgiana had first made the acquaintance of the queen in 1772 and in 1775 the Spencers and the Devonshires again stopped at Versailles and paid their respects to Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. On this second visit a close friendship developed between the queen and Georgiana that lasted until the queen’s execution in 1793.⁴³ Georgiana also formed enduring friendships with members of Marie Antoinette’s set, particularly with the Duchess of Polignac. Throughout her stay in 1775 the three women went everywhere together, ‘wore each other’s favours on their bosoms, and exchanged locks of hair as keepsakes’.⁴⁴ Thus, on seeing her old friends in these troubled times, in June 1789, Georgiana could only sympathize with their misfortunes.

On 27 June 1789 Louis XVI capitulated and ordered the first two Estates (clergy and nobles) to join the Third (the people). Georgiana wrote to her mother that this

⁴² Georgiana to her mother Lady Spencer, 26 June 1789, in Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, *Georgiana: Extracts from the Correspondence of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, ed. the Earl of Bessborough (London, 1955), p.148.

⁴³ As Georgiana’s biographer, Brian Masters, writes about the relationship between the two, ‘Whenever an Englishwoman was presented at the French Court, the Queen invariably asked after Georgiana and sent messages and presents for her. It must have been a tremendous bore for everyone to discover that the Duchess of Devonshire was the one woman in England esteemed above all others by the French Queen’, Masters, *Georgiana*, p. 172. Amanda Foreman describes how the two discovered they had much in common, ‘not only in having married a position rather than a lover, but also in their relations with their mothers’, Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 40. Empress Marie Thérèse, like Lady Spencer, ‘combined an intense, almost suffocating love for her children with a manipulative and dominating manner’, *ibid.*, p. 40.

⁴⁴ Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 41.

action ‘in fact is giving up his authority entirely’.⁴⁵ She observed the spirit of the moment: ‘The people are wild with joy, and all our friends miserable’.⁴⁶ Similarly to the accounts of Mrs. Swinburne and Grace Elliott, in the early July, she noted that the sans-culottes were screaming at the Palais Royal, the guards were refusing to act, and bands of youths were ‘mad’ and were prone to commit violent acts against the rich in the streets.⁴⁷ ‘In short’, Georgiana wrote to her mother, ‘[it is] all licence and confusion’.⁴⁸ Despite the confusing and dangerous state of the streets, Georgiana went out to meet La Fayette and other leaders of the ‘patriots’ at the Viscount of Noailles’ house and argued with them about political matters.⁴⁹ As she had done in London, Georgiana spoke out about her politics and debated bravely with the leaders of the revolutionaries. Although she was opposed to the court in her home country, she was *for* the court in France not only on account of her royal friends but also out of her respect for social order.

The Duke of Devonshire was eager to leave Paris, thus the Devonshires left Versailles on 8 July and headed to Brussels, where they heard the news of Paris and Versailles: ‘They expect a dreadful riot. Already the Bank bills are not taken in payment and if the Foreign troupes, which to two and twenty thousand surround Paris,

⁴⁵ Georgiana to Lady Spencer, 27 June 1789, in Duchess of Devonshire, *Correspondence*, p. 150.

⁴⁶ Georgiana to Lady Spencer, 27 June 1789, in *ibid.*, p. 150.

⁴⁷ Georgiana to Lady Spencer, 29 June 1789, in *ibid.*, pp. 150-1.

⁴⁸ Georgiana to Lady Spencer, 29 June 1789, in *ibid.*, p. 151.

⁴⁹ Georgiana to Lady Spencer, 5 July 1789, in *ibid.*, p. 151.

do not contain the populace, there will be a dreadful riot. Versailles, they say, is already attack'd.⁵⁰ In the following week Georgiana wrote to her mother about the dreadful nights of 13 and 14 July: '*aux armes* cry'd in ev'ry street, the mad populace arm'd with pistols, swords and bayonets'.⁵¹ On hearing the news of these events in close proximity, Georgiana admitted that not only the French but the British travellers like her became frightened by the 'extraordinary events' and she knew clearly that it was not another version of the British Glorious Revolution of 1688.⁵² Georgiana understood the revolutionaries' call for political change; yet, experiencing the Revolution in close proximity like Elliott and Swinburne, this Revolution, for Georgiana, was like a series of destructive and chaotic rebellions and attacks rather than a rational political reform.

Although the Duke wanted to return to England, Georgiana's pregnancy detained them in Belgium beyond the end of September 1789. Revolutionary enthusiasm had spread to Brussels and there were protests in the streets against the Emperor Joseph II. Almost a royalist in France, Georgiana now in Brussels reasserted her Whig principles against the court and supported the patriots because she thought it was necessary to reduce the power of the Austrian court in Belgium. 'You know that I am a good Royalist in France', as she wrote to the French ex-minister

⁵⁰ Georgiana to Lady Spencer, 12 July 1789, in *ibid.*, p. 152.

⁵¹ Georgiana to Lady Spencer, 16 July 1789, in *ibid.*, p. 153.

⁵² Georgiana to Lady Spencer, 18 July 1789, in *ibid.*, p. 153.

Charles-Alexandre de Calonne, ‘well, in Brusells I am a good Patriot.’⁵³ Like Burke, what Georgiana supported was the idea of limited government and Crown, not to remove monarchy and establishing order.

The Devonshires returned to France and stayed at Passy, a suburb of Paris, until the end of August, 1790. As Amanda Foreman points out, by the time Georgiana came back home, the Whigs were split into opposing groups due to their views of the French Revolution.⁵⁴ Burke led the camp against the Revolution by maintaining that this ‘extraordinary’ event was the triumph of barbarism and despotic democracy, whereas Sheridan, against Burke, headed another Whig group, praising the victory of civil and religious liberty in France. Fox, meanwhile, could not see the elements of anarchy in the Revolution, as analyzed by Burke, or those of democracy, as expressed by Sheridan. Fox, who saw Louis XVI as a despot like George III, and who was a friend of La Fayette and Talleyrand, agreed with neither Burke nor Sheridan.⁵⁵ But he did not generally intend to be associated with the radicals as we shall see in Chapter 5.⁵⁶ In the view of Fox, as L. G. Mitchell points out, the French were operating ‘Whig values’ and following the British events of 1688 and 1784 to reduce the power of the

⁵³ Georgiana to Calonne, 19 November 1789, quoted in Foreman, *Georgiana*. p. 238.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 247. For the growing tensions in the Whig party, see Frank O’Gorman, *The Whig Party and the French Revolution* (London, 1967), ch. 2.

⁵⁵ See L. G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 109-10.

⁵⁶ Fox made a statement in the House of Commons on 30 April 1792 that he ‘had read but one of Mr. Paine’s pamphlets, and that he did not approve it, and from what he had heard of the other, he was inclined to think, that he should not approve of that either’. He also pointed out that he disliked Burke’s works on the French Revolution too. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 117.

crown.⁵⁷ Georgiana's political ideas were initially closer to Fox's and Sheridan's than to Burke's. Yet Georgiana's first-hand experience of revolution in France and Belgium, as Forman stresses, made her disagree with Sheridan and Fox.⁵⁸ One reason must be that she was a friend of the Bourbons, while Fox disliked them. Most of Fox's friends in France were patriots and opposed the King.⁵⁹ Moreover, a witness to the Revolution in Paris, Georgiana knew the great difference between this French Revolution and the British one of 1688. As John Derry puts it, 'the Opposition Whigs viewed French politics with the English experience uppermost in their minds. They ignored essential differences between Britain and France, emphasizing superficial similarities between them.'⁶⁰ The Foxites believed that the French were about to establish a constitutional monarchy on the British model. Thus, viewing the French Revolution through his British assumptions and expectations, as Derry suggests, Fox considered it as 'a good stout blow against the influence of the crown'.⁶¹ True, the French did try to establish a constitutional monarchy, but failed. Residing in Paris and Versailles, Georgiana understood that the French Revolution, instead of imitating the moderate British example, was based on the radical ideology of egalitarianism and was hostile to property and rank. The Revolutionary methods which intended to

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁵⁸ Foreman, *Georgiana*. p. 247.

⁵⁹ Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, p. 110.

⁶⁰ Derry, 'The Opposition Whigs and the French Revolution 1789-1815', p. 40.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

destroy established civilization were possibly a portent of violence, chaos and war. Thus, as Foreman puts it, 'some of the Whig speeches at home in support of the French Revolution struck her [Georgiana] as rather naïve'.⁶² Both the Foxites and the radicals agreed with the revolutionaries' ideals and tried to rationalize chaos and violence which were necessary means to reach the aims. They did not anticipate that such means would undermine the virtuous goals of the Revolution. Georgiana doubted that the Revolution would carry out Whig reformist ideals, and she was fearful that the chaos and violence she had witnessed in France would also happen in Britain. Foreman points out that, according to Georgiana's personal letters, 'Georgiana would never forget the unruly hatred of the mob, nor her last visit to Marie Antoinette when the taunts of the crowd could be heard outside the gates'.⁶³ Because of such fears, she seemed to sympathize with Burke's *Reflections*: the Revolution was anarchical and was going to destroy all property and tradition. Georgiana therefore allied herself with a select group of Britons who were striving to constrain the Revolution within reasonable bounds. She also organized a letter-writing campaign urging the National Assembly to treat the Royal family with restraint.⁶⁴

3. Perspective from British Radicals

As we have noted, the toasts of the British Club in Paris on 18 November 1792

⁶² Foreman, *Georgiana*, p. 245.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 248-9.

acknowledged the contribution of the radical women of Britain: '[to] the Women of Great Britain, particularly those who have distinguished themselves by their writings in favour of the French revolution, Mrs. [Charlotte] Smith and Miss H. M. Williams.'

Helen Maria Williams, a well-known poet of sensibility and a hostess of politically active dissenters in London, was one of the first radicals to go to France, filled with enthusiasm for the Revolution, as we have seen in Chapter 2. Her eight volumes of *Letters Written from France* traced the development of the Revolution from the Fête de la Fédération on 14 July 1790, through the Convention period, to the aftermath of the Terror in 1796.⁶⁵ As I have maintained in Part One of this thesis, Williams' political discourses on the French Revolution were an assertion of her emotional sensibility in order to win public sympathy. The editors of Helen Maria Williams' *Letters Written in France in the Summer of 1790*, Neil Fraistat and Susan Lanser, suggest that, 'Burke and Williams share an affective approach to the Revolution that

⁶⁵ These eight volumes are: *Letters Written in France in the Summer of 1790* (London, 1790); *Letters Written from France*, 4 vols., 1792-1796 (the first volume is a reprint of the above; the second bears the title, *Letters from France: Containing Many New Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution, and the Present State of French Manners*, London, 1792; the third and the fourth bear the title, *Letters from France: Containing a Great Variety of Interesting and Original Information Concerning the Most Important Events that Have Lately Occurred in that Country, and Particularly Respecting the Campaign of 1792*, London, 1793); *Letters Written from France*, 4 vols., 1795-1796 (the first two bear the title, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France, from the Thirty-first of May 1793, till the Twenty-eighth of July 1794, and of the Scenes which have Passed in the Prisons of Paris*, 2 vols. London, 1795; the third bears the title, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Scenes which Passed in Various Departments of France during the Tyranny of Robespierre and of the Events which Took Place in Paris on the 28th of July 1795*, London, 1795; the fourth and final of Letters is titled *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France, from the Twenty-eighth of July 1794, to the Establishment of the Constitution in 1795, and of the Scenes which have Passed in the Prisons of Paris*, London, 1796). See M. Ray Adams, 'Helen Maria Williams and the French Revolution', in *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Studies in Honor of George McLean Harper*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs et al. (Princeton, 1939), pp. 87-8, footnote 3.

ultimately sets sensibility and sympathy above reason as the foundation of moral and political agency, distancing them from the Enlightenment rationalism of Paine and Wollstonecraft and from the deconstructive dialogues of More.’⁶⁶ Her rhetorical strategy proved a success in the political climate of 1790. Although Burke’s *Reflections* were about to stir British anxieties, Williams’ first *Letters* were well received in intellectual circles.

This twenty-nine-year-old British woman arrived in Paris one day before the Fête de la Fédération held on 14 July 1790, a huge celebration to commemorate the fall of the Bastille and the establishment of the constitutional monarchy. At this time, many British and French radical intellectuals saw the Fête as the happy ending of the French Revolution. Instead of denying the legitimacy of Louis XVI, the National Assembly agreed to organize a general federation and promised stable institutions and national reconciliation and unity. People from the nobility to day-labourers joined this celebration. Williams was among them on that day. As Fraistat and Lanser indicate, as Williams was overwhelmingly affected by the sublime and spectacular scene of the Fête, joined by more than thirty thousand of people from all provinces and all classes, her series of *Letters* started with this event and her vision of the French Revolution

⁶⁶ Neil Fraistat and Susan S. Lanser, ‘Introduction’, in Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Written in France: in the Summer 1790, to a Friend in England, Containing Various Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution*, ed. Neil Fraistat and Susan S. Lanser (Ontario, 2001), p. 41.

was fixed on this day.⁶⁷

Williams wrote: 'It was the triumph of human kind; it was man asserting the noblest privileges of his nature; and it required but the common feelings of humanity to become in that moment a citizen of the world.'⁶⁸ She believed that 'the leaders of the French revolution', were men 'well acquainted with the human heart'.⁶⁹ As she explained, these men did not only rely on 'the force of reason', but 'have studied to interest in their cause the most powerful passions of human nature'.⁷⁰ The Revolution defended men's natural rights which were guaranteed to all human beings. Thus, to welcome and sympathize with the French victory for universal liberty was 'natural'. It was during the Revolution that the consciousness and humanity of all were awakened. Burke appealed to men's natural feelings as well, but within a different content. As argued in Chapter 3, instead of appealing to abstract rights, Burke reaffirmed the value of tradition, experience, and prescription. For him, Britain's constitution and politics followed their natural course. In contrast, the French Revolution, which uprooted all established institutions in defiance of the past, was 'unnatural'. Whilst Williams hailed the Revolution's spirit of democracy, therefore, Burke represented the Revolution as a horror-filled action by the mob devastating all social values.

In Letter IX of her first volume of *Letters*, Williams mentioned that she was

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Letter II, p. 69.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, Letter VIII, p. 90.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter VIII, p. 90.

accused by her anonymous friend of expressing too much enthusiasm for the Revolution; her friend anticipated that she would return to England a fierce republican. Williams answered, 'I shall not only observe, that it is very difficult, with common sensibility, to avoid sympathizing in general happiness. My love of the French revolution, is the natural result of this sympathy, and therefore my political creed is entirely an affair of the heart; for I have not been so absurd as to consult my head upon matters of which it is so incapable of judging.'⁷¹ In his *Reflections*, Burke denounced the Revolution, which rejected the 'civilized' *ancien régime*, advocated liberty and equality, and appealed to the masses, as an unnatural action that would literally lead western civilization to anarchy and barbarity. Williams, however, thought of the Revolution in a completely different way. She appealed to people's hearts by saying that to sympathize with the Revolution was an action which would bring general happiness to all human beings. Hence, it was a most natural consequence for her, and all others, to welcome such a new age with delight.

Her opinions represented the ideas of the British radicals who considered the culture of the *ancien régime*, the Gothic past, as an era of superstition, oppression and barbarity. Williams wrote:

When we look back on the ignorance, the superstition, the barbarous persecution of Gothic times, is it not something to be thankful for, that we exist at this enlightened period, when such evils are no more; when

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Letter IX, p. 91.

particular tenets of religious belief are no longer imputed as crimes; when the human mind has made as many important discoveries in morality as in science, and liberality of sentiment is cultivated with as much success as arts and learning; when, in short, (and *you* are not one of those who will suspect that I am not all the while a good Englishwoman) when one can witness an event so sublime as the French revolution?⁷²

Whereas Burke lamented the passing of the age of chivalry and the civilized *ancien régime*, Williams, like Wollstonecraft, revealed her progressive principles in her *Letters*. Thanks to the Enlightenment philosophers, for Williams, France had begun to advance from barbarity, injustice and ignorance towards advanced civilization based on enlightened teachings. She sincerely hoped that all nations would destroy their old systems and '[follow] the liberal systems which France has adopted' in the near future, so that the age of oppression and superstition should give way to 'the reign of reason, virtue, and science'.⁷³ Note that what Williams wholeheartedly anticipated was exactly what most Britons feared.

Williams witnessed violence and disorder during her first stay in Paris; but, aware of the sufferings inflicted on the French people in the *ancien régime*, she accepted the current excesses to a certain degree. In Mary Wollstonecraft's case, commenting in London, she had been trying to rationalize the excesses of the Revolution in the same way as Williams'. None the less, arriving in Paris, witnessing the violence directly, Wollstonecraft could no longer tolerate the Terror and her vision

⁷² *Ibid.*, Letter VIII, p. 91.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, Letter VI, p. 82.

of the Revolution became melancholic. Williams witnessed the victims who had been sacrificed due to popular fury. It was the first time that Williams' zeal 'chilled': 'I lamented the revolution', she wrote. But, she knew that these men who were victims during the Revolution had wrought dreadful oppression on the people throughout history:

It is for ever to be regretted, that so dark a shade of ferocious revenge was thrown across the glories of the revolution. But alas! where do the records of history point out a revolution unstained by some actions of barbarity? When do the passions of human nature rise to that pitch which produces great events, without wandering into some irregularities? If the French revolution could cost no farther bloodshed, it must be allowed, notwithstanding a few shocking instances of public vengeance, that the liberty of twenty-four millions of people will have been purchased at a far cheaper rate that could ever have been expected from the former experience of the world.⁷⁴

For her, if the blessings of the Revolution must be purchased with blood, all people who loved liberty should not shrink from paying the price. Williams, with her strong faith in the Revolutionary principles, stood too close to the Revolution, whether in time or in space, to recognize the potential danger of the sans-culottes, which had been a weapon of the Jacobins from the very beginning. Once this weapon was used, the violent tide of the Revolution could hardly be stopped.

Williams printed and published her *Letters Written in France* at the same time with Burke's *Reflections*, in November 1790, and so, of course, she could not be

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Letter X, p. 98.

responding directly to the *Reflections*. Williams, however, had anticipated that the Revolution controversy would soon break out in her native country and she tacitly answered the political criticisms raised by conservative thinkers:

I wish that some of our political critics would speak with less contempt, than they are apt to do, of the new constitution of France, and no longer repeat after one another the trite remark, that the French have gone too far, because they have gone farther than ourselves; as if it were not possible that that degree of influence which is perfectly safe in the hand of the executive part of our government, might be dangerous, at this crisis, to the liberty of France.⁷⁵

She alleged that those who responded to the French Revolution with contempt did so because of their envy of the great improvements being made in the French political systems. She argued, 'it appears evident that the temple of Freedom which they are erecting, even if imperfect in some of its proportions, must be preferable to the old gloomy Gothic fabric which they have laid in ruins'.⁷⁶ When Williams heard her countrymen, who 'guard their own rights with such unremitting vigilance', and who 'would rather part with life than liberty, speak with contempt of the French of having imbibed the noble lesson which England has taught', she could not but suspect that 'some mean jealousy lurks beneath the ungenerous censure'.⁷⁷ It appeared to her that these British wished to 'make monopoly of liberty' and were angry that France should claim a share of that precious property.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Letter IX, p. 92.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, Letter IX, p. 92.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, Letter IX, p. 92.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Letter IX, p. 92.

Williams left France early in September 1790 with her manuscripts of the *Letters*. In her last letter, she recorded what she had heard from sailors and visitors in London during her trip from Dieppe to London that ‘one had need to go to France to know how to like old England’ because France was full of dismay and horror, nothing but ‘crimes, assassinations, torture, and death’ and every town was ‘the scene of a massacre’, every street was darkened with a gallows, and every highway deluged with blood.⁷⁹ Everyone brought her this kind of story of the French nation. Here again she believed that the Revolution controversy would soon be fuelled.

The major cause of the growing dislike of the French Revolution in Britain, Williams assumed, was the result of exaggerated stories which were circulated by French émigrés in Britain. She asked herself, ‘Is this the picture of France?’; ‘Are these the images of that universal joy, which called tears into my eyes, and made my heart throb with sympathy?’⁸⁰ She was irritated that the French Revolution was being misrepresented in Britain, since this misrepresentation contradicted her personal sense of the Revolution that she had just experienced. She guessed that she would be called a perverter of minds because she showed no sympathy with ‘those who have lost a part of their superfluities’. None the less, she delightedly stressed her democratic sympathy that ‘the oppressed are protected’, ‘the wronged are redressed’, ‘the captive

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Letter XXVI, p. 147.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter XXVI, p. 147.

is set at liberty' and 'the poor have bread'.⁸¹ Before her second trip to Paris, in September 1791, she announced her departure to her readers in a poem entitled *A Farewell for Two Years to England*, which responded to Burkean attacks on the Revolution and attributed British hostility to the Revolution to the anti-Gallicanism that Burke had deployed.

After Williams' success with the *Letters Written in France* of 1790, she brought out seven more volumes of letters between 1792 and 1796. As Deborah Kennedy emphasizes, however, the responses to Williams' writings reflected the political divisions accentuated by the Revolutionary debates and are thus characterized by their political allegiances and gender expectations.⁸² After the September Massacres and the overthrow of the monarchy in the late 1792, the tide of opinion in Britain turned decisively against the French Revolution. Williams' British readers expected her to respond to the violence and injustice of the French events with her benevolent female tender heart, but her persistent support for its principles and continued defence of its ideals disappointed British readers. Her amiable image as a female poet changed to that of an indifferent woman who had been corrupted by the Revolution.⁸³

In short, from the outbreak of the Revolution in July 1789 to the summer of

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Letter XXVI, p. 148.

⁸² Deborah Kennedy, 'Benevolent Historian: Helen Maria Williams and her British Readers', in *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, ed. Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke (Albany, 2001), p. 318.

⁸³ For the British responses to Helen Maria Williams, see *ibid.*, pp. 317-36; Adams, 'Helen Maria Williams and the French Revolution', pp. 114-17; and Mary A. Favret, 'Spectatrice as Spectacle: Helen Maria Williams At Home in the Revolution', *Studies in Romanticism*, 32(1993), 273-95.

1792, women travellers' political responses to the events in France were varied. Even the conservatives might rejoice at hearing the fall of Bastille, because they thought that the French were taking the British constitution as their model and believed this Revolution would bring liberty to the French nation. These conservative women soon gave up this hope, however, after they had witnessed the upheavals in Paris. They were shocked and scared by the fact that the revolutionaries wanted to overthrow all social order. Moreover, Burke's *Reflections* were starting to influence his British readers' political opinions during this period, though they did not yet dominate them. Some conservatives had not yet seen the frightening aspects of the Revolution. In the end, for radicals, the voices calling for change and reform were still loud before the reign of the Robespierre, despite the fact that some began to feel confused about the rightness of the French Revolution. Most of them responded enthusiastically to the early events of the French Revolution and its democratic ideals.

CHAPTER 5

THE REVOLUTION CONTROVERSY (II): 1792-1794

We now continue to discuss British women travellers' witnessing of the French Revolution and their political opinions on the Revolution controversy, moving the focus to the period between 1792 and 1794. The Revolution controversy heated by the French Revolution continued to burn in Britain during this period. Whereas the radicals insisted on a concept of civil government which was created on the basis of all men's natural rights, conservative theorists, led by Burke, and the loyalist propagandists, argued that, 'government was necessary to protect private property, to preserve the natural distinctions in society, and to restrain man's passionate and selfish nature'.¹ The radicals attacked the traditional order, aiming to fulfil the rational philosophy of the Enlightenment; in contrast, the conservatives denounced the idea of creating a new order on the basis of abstract concepts and speculative theories. As was argued in Chapter 3, Burke asserted that the accepted traditional authorities in Britain provided the best example of a balanced constitution and had secured the interests of the state and the general happiness of the people. The emotional propaganda of loyalist writers successfully aroused a general admiration for the British constitution and a feeling of anti-Gallicanism among the general public

¹ H. T. Dickinson, 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford, 1990), p. 507.

from late 1792.

The loyalists were those conservatives who developed several movements throughout Britain to resist radical causes and produced a vast range of propaganda from 1792 to 1795.² They were alarmed by the violence of the Revolution, the overthrow of the French Monarchy and the outbreak of war in Europe by late 1792. They supported the British constitution and were against the proceedings that attempted to undermine it and to produce riots, and were encouraged by the government and a royal proclamation in May 1792.³ Loyalist propaganda made exaggerated references to the news coming from Revolutionary France: the French Jacobins were overthrowing all social order, all property rights and religion,⁴ they committed the crimes of the September Massacres, executed Louis XVI and waged war against almost all of Europe, including Britain, and so threatened to spread anarchy and devastation throughout the Continent. In addition, even after the overthrow of the constitutional monarchy in the summer of 1792 and the establishment of the Convention, the French Jacobins had still failed to bring liberty

²² For the details of the development of the loyalists and their influence, see Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country: the English Loyalists and the French Revolution* (Lexington, 1983). See also Dickinson, 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', pp. 503-33.

³ According to Dozier, on 21 May 1792, George III signed a proclamation warning his subjects that the 'wicked and seditious writings' which had been circulated throughout the kingdom 'might excite tumult and disorder'. This proclamation urged his loyal subjects 'to avoid and discourage all proceedings, tending to produce riots and tumults.' Quoted in Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p. 1.

⁴ The Revolution in fact did not wipe out the nobility and titled families as it promised. See P. M. Jones, *The French Revolution 1787-1804* (Harlow, 2003), p. 97. Simon Schama also argues that the end of the seigniorial regime was proclaimed to be a great social alteration by the revolutionaries, yet it was 'promised more than delivered', Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 2004), p. 719.

to France. From late 1792 to the end of the Terror in 1794, therefore, with the successful rallying of loyalist propaganda, a deep and general hatred of the French was roused in Britain. Fewer people risked their lives to travel to France in this period. Those who were detained in France at this time presented themselves as sufferers of the Revolution, lamented the death of the king and queen and expressed their revulsion towards the campaign of violence. Many British radicals even decided to return to England in 1792, with the exception of Wollstonecraft, who embarked on her journey to Paris at the end of the year, and Helen Maria Williams, who decided to live permanently in Paris after August 1792. Most radical writers shrank from Revolutionary methods, although they continued to subscribe to Revolutionary principles.

A. Perspective from the Conservatives

As Charlotte West observed, after the summer of 1792, all became gloomy in France. The Revolutionary troops had committed many shocking cruelties in Paris and beyond. She witnessed the destruction wrought by the young fédérés of Marseille. Fédérés were National Guards or volunteers, twenty thousand of whom were summoned from areas outside Paris in order to protect the legislative Assembly. Schama stresses that many of the fédérés came from the most embattled areas of

France with full enthusiasm inflamed by the radical rhetoric of the Jacobins.⁵ In the eyes of Grace Elliott, the National Guards were no better than the mob.⁶ Charlotte West found that the troops were hostile to all well-dressed persons, men or women, and treated them as aristocrats. As historian Robert Darnton points out, under the Terror, eighty-five percent of the guillotined were ‘commoners’, a statistic which proves that ‘the word “aristocrat” could be applied to almost anyone deemed to be an enemy to the people’.⁷ West also witnessed how cruelly Monsieur Chánlâire [*sic*], a king’s counsellor, was treated by the troops in the name of *patrie*, and *la liberté*. This deaf, blind, almost ninety-year-old man had his nose cut off because he mistakenly identified himself as an aristocrat. Such wanton violence that came to prevail in France shocked her. She declaimed:

Oh! Liberty, known by all, by name, but understood by few. How many, Oh, Goddess born! in thy name, commit the most unheard of cruelties, the newest kind of ways! No; it is thy frantic sister, Licentiousness, who profanes thy name, and fools and knaves lay hold on her, and call on thee. Now, what are thy attributes, Oh, Liberty! The love of social order; the giver of wholesome laws, which protect man from man, and defend the king upon his throne, and the cobbler in his stall; and he that would dethrone his king, would rob the poor cobbler also, could he gain any thing by it.⁸

⁵ Schama, *Citizens*, p. 518. Schama quotes Marat’s *L’Ami du Peuple*, which appealed to the people by asking them why ‘the rich alone should harvest the fruits of the revolution while you have won from the revolution only the sad right to continue to pay heavy taxes and like Turks or Prussians be subject to conscription.’ Schama, *Citizens*, p. 518.

⁶ Grace Dalrymple Elliott, *Journal of My Life during the French Revolution* (London, 1859), p. 63.

⁷ Robert Darnton, ‘What was Revolutionary about the French Revolution?’, in *The French Revolution in Social and Political Perspective*, ed. Peter Jones, (London, 1996), p. 26.

⁸ Charlotte West, *A Ten Years’ Residence in France, During the Severest Part of the Revolution, from the Year 1787 to 1797, Containing Various Anecdotes of Some of the Most Remarkable Personages of that Period* (London, 1821), p. 17.

This was what concerned Burke. Pure democracy would only bring chaos and anarchy. Liberty was not the most essential element in politics; rather, liberty needed to be put under restraint. Burke maintained that liberty could last only when it worked with constitutional monarchy, a parliamentary system, the rule of laws and social discipline, the obedience of armies, the security of property, and ‘with peace and order, with civil and social manners’.⁹ Charlotte West, adhering to Burke’s political opinions, pointed out that this Revolution in the name of liberty and reform, inciting popular revolt against property and the nobility, actually answered only the revolutionaries’ ‘ambitious and *vile* purposes’.¹⁰ As one of the observers of the Revolution who ‘have seen it *nearly*, and felt it *severely*, and can vouch for the truth’, she therefore implored her readers: ‘Oh! Could my humble endeavours and advice prevail on those who are *panting* for liberty, to read these lines, and see in their mind’s eye what I have seen in reality; surely, they would stop their headlong career, and spare the blood of thousands’.¹¹

In late 1792, all Charlotte West could anticipate were dark, uncertain and continual fears. Only when British visitors had applied personally for a passport in Paris would they have permission to leave France, however. Thus, the Wests went to Paris in January 1793 in hope of getting their passports; but time passed and they

⁹ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. L. G. Mitchell (Oxford, 1999), p. 8.

¹⁰ West, *A Ten Years' Residence*, p. 17.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

were no better off: 'Various changes and revolutions took place; and we were often called up in the middle of the night to shew our papers; and to see if the account which we gave of ourselves at different places, agreed one with another.'¹² West was later arrested along with all the British residing in France after the failure of the expedition to Quiberon in June 1795, during which action a mixed force of French émigrés and British regulars landed in Brittany to take back the region from the revolutionaries.¹³ After this event she was separated from her husband and was shuttled between four different convent prisons as a captive.

In prison, during her darkest hours, she sometimes heard screams, groans and sobs, as groups of prisoners were sent to Paris. 'None but the hearts of Republicans could see such a sight unmoved', West bemoaned.¹⁴ When she sang 'God save the King' for pleasure in prison at the request of other Frenchwomen, she was denounced to the authorities by an English Colonel Kenting and was almost executed. She defended herself as a subject of Britain and claimed not to know the law which forbade anyone to speak in favour of the king.¹⁵ She was only singing her national

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 54-5.

¹³ Like her inaccurately putting the flight of Varennes in the year of 1792, this point is confusing again. The expedition to Quiberon took place in June 1795; Charlotte West however mistakenly placed the event in June 1793 in this travel journal. Nothing further is known of the author's life, thus we do not know whether the trip was taken or not, and how far the journal was fictionalized. Apparently, although she wanted to explain the reason why she was put into prison, she identified the wrong event with the wrong date. Despite this, she reflects British people's common responses to the Revolution.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-2.

anthem for her own amusement.¹⁶ She avoided the guillotine. Whether fact or fiction, this anecdote, together with other stories such as her unwillingness to take off the black cockade,¹⁷ seem carefully designed to depict her as a patriotic British woman, who not only had a tender heart towards the royal family, but also bravely confronted the brutal revolutionaries.

Grace Elliott recollected the days during the reign of Robespierre since the death of the king in 1793: '[f]rom that period everything bespoke terror.'¹⁸ Paris seemed dismal. People were afraid even of chatting with each other in the streets, not to mention to speak aloud in public. Even in their own rooms they were still frightened, because soldiers were sent to inspect their houses: 'If you laughed, you were accused of joy at some bad news the republic had had; if you cried, they said that you regretted their success.'¹⁹ No carriages were to be seen in the streets but two or three; she wrote, and 'no visits were paid or received'.²⁰ During the Terror, theatres were no longer belonged to upper class; instead, these places were full of Jacobins and 'the lowest set' of common women in red caps and dressed as figures of Liberty.²¹ Paris, to Elliott, became a city of disgust and riots.²²

Grace Elliott, reputed to be a royalist, was tried on suspicion of acting as agent

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 13-14.

¹⁸ Elliott, *Journal*, p. 123.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 129-30.

of the queen and sending a messenger to the Austrian government in Brussels in 1790,²³ and of hiding a royalist, Chansnets, in her house in 1792.²⁴ She was also charged with a conspiracy to help the queen out of the Temple,²⁵ as well as with her possession of a letter to Charles James Fox.²⁶ Elliott pointed out that the people who interrogated her were apparently ignorant. They had heard of Pitt and Fox, ‘but did not know anything of their politics’.²⁷ She was told that she had been suspected for a long time, and now she would be accused of having been in correspondence with the enemies of the Republic. Although she assured them of the politics and attitudes of Fox, she was still arrested. She was released because of Vergniaud’s explanation for her of the matter of Fox’s letter during her trial in the Revolutionary Tribunal;²⁸ nevertheless, she was still imprisoned eventually probably in late 1793 because of her connection with the Duke of Orleans.²⁹

During her confinement in several different prisons, once she was very sick, and she prayed for death. Although she was in a ‘miserable dirty-truckle-bed’, she thought it was far better than being put to death by the hands of the executioner, and ‘being made a show for horrid crowds which followed the poor victims to the scaffold.’³⁰

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 52-3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 82-96.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 136-7. She did not mention when she was tried.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-50, 154-5. There is no precise date in her account.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

Many of her *ci-devant* friends were guillotined during her eighteen-month imprisonment. Until her narrow escape from death on 4 October 1794 and her release after the Terror, she lived every day with dread of coming events. In her vivid memories of the French Revolution, we see her revulsion at the revolutionaries and at crowd violence. We cannot find any optimistic hope for the Revolution or a slight idea that the Revolution would bring any social or political progress. The Revolution was, for Elliott, a series of actions by the cruel Jacobins who wanted power, and the uneducated dirty crowd.

Elliott idealized the monarchy and the upper class, especially the queen. She represented Marie Antoinette as a beautiful, amiable and civilized queen, as well as an affectionate and melancholy mother. To her and to those who attended nearest to the queen, ‘she was goodness itself – a kind and most affectionate mistress’.³¹ She lamented the sad situation of the beautiful queen, who was cruelly treated by the French nation during the Revolution. While in prison, Elliott heard the news of Marie Antoinette’s execution on 16 October 1793; ‘Nothing now surprised us; for we had then been used to nothing but horrors’, wrote Elliot.³² She continued to praise the queen’s ‘greatness’ and ‘courage’ at the point of death, which inspired all prisoners to ‘try and imitate so great and good an example’ to face death with dignity.³³ Like

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 177.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 177-8.

Burke's defence of Marie Antoinette, who symbolized the *ancien régime*, Elliott assured readers that the queen was more than a tender beauty; the queen faced the brutal force of the French Jacobins – 'a band of cruel ruffians and assassins' - with great courage and dignity.³⁴ Thus, by the pen of Elliott, the Revolution was equated with a series of violent and unjust actions, which were performed by a group of mad men in the name of liberty. For her, the tragic death of Marie Antoinette represented the end of a civilized age.

B. View from the Opposition Whigs

In 1791 Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, became pregnant with the child of the young Whig politician, Charles Grey. In order to provide Georgiana with an excuse to go abroad, her sister, Harriet (Lady Bessborough), pretended to be very ill. The plan was that her medical doctor would order her to go abroad for health reasons, and then she could have the company of Georgiana.³⁵ The Duke still found out the truth, however, and was incensed. He ordered Georgiana to go into exile and renounce Grey; otherwise he would divorce her and she would be refused access to their children.³⁶ Finally Lady Spencer, Harriet and her husband, and Elizabeth Foster accompanied Georgiana during her exile. From November 1791 they travelled through France,

³⁴ Burke, *Reflections*, p. 71.

³⁵ Brian Masters, *Georgiana* (London, 1981), pp. 193-6; the editor's note in Georgiana Cavendish, Duchess of Devonshire, *Georgiana: Extracts from the Correspondence of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, ed. the Earl of Bessborough (London, 1955), pp. 183-4.

³⁶ Masters, *Georgiana* (London, 1981), pp. 193-6

Switzerland, and Italy, eventually settling in Naples until 1793. Lady Sutherland wrote to Georgiana that Paris had become a city of horror after 10 August 1792 in the hands of the cruel fédérés of Marseille and the Parisian crowd: the revolutionaries do nothing but '*arrêter, interroger, guillotiner* (arrest, interrogate, and guillotine)'.³⁷ Anarchy reigned in France and, to these upper class British women, this was the result of democracy. Harriet wrote to her son in March 1793:

How grateful we ought all to feel at being born under a government whose wisdom protects & preserves the laws, while it allows such a degree of liberty to the people & is so calculated for their happiness as to prevent their even forming a wish for a change. A revolution (even the best) must always be dreadful at the moment of its happening, but when it is the entire overthrow of every law divine or human, & attended with every circumstance of cruelty & violence, how odious it becomes, but I believe the national character of the English, the generosity & real courage of their nature, would alone preserve them from ever acting as the French have done ...³⁸

Once a supporter of Fox, before the French Revolution, after experiencing political turmoil in France and Europe, she, like her sister Georgiana, could no longer accept the Foxite view that the French Revolution followed the British example and the revolutionaries posed little threat to the social order of Britain. Moreover, she could not accept the Foxites' explanation for the violence of the Revolution, akin to the British radicals' excuse, that it was absolutist monarchy which was more to blame than the French revolutionaries for the subsequent uncontrollable violence and

³⁷ Lady Sutherland to Georgiana, 31 August 1792, Duchess of Devonshire, *Correspondence*, p. 194.

³⁸ Harriet to her son Frederick, Rome, 27 March 1793, in *Lady Bessborough and her Family Circle*, ed. The Earl of Bessborough and A. Aspinall (London, 1940), p. 80.

disorder.³⁹ Harriet revealed her sympathy for Burke's conservative attitudes to the British political and social order. Her experiences in Europe made her accept that, first, Britain enjoyed the best constitution, accumulated through the wisdom of history; second, that a revolution led only to violence, anarchy and war; and third, that according to the British national character, such a violent and radical revolution would not happen in Britain.

The Devonshire group returned to England in September 1793. By this time, due to the war between France and Austria in April, the overthrow of the monarchy in August and the September Massacres, all in 1792, and the spread of the Revolutionary ideals in Britain by the radicals, the British people began to revise their opinions about the Revolution and become aware of the danger of it as Burke had insisted. It turned out that the Revolution of 1789 was not another version of that of 1688. The radicals who sympathized with the Revolution were regarded as allies of the French and therefore traitors to Britain. When the Foxite Whigs, led by Sheridan and Grey, set up a group, 'The Association of the Friends of the People', in April 1792, to call for parliamentary reform, this association was regarded as 'a democratical faction'.⁴⁰ It was an aristocratic reform society, which, according to Grey, represented a middle way between frightened conservatives and reckless radicalism, and offered a means to

³⁹ For Fox's explanation of Revolutionary violence, see L. G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 124-5.

⁴⁰ James Bland Burges to Col. Simcoe, 4 May 1792, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 120.

communicate reformist opinions outside Parliament.⁴¹ Fox was displeased with the Association as well, because, as ‘the Associators [brought] forward parliamentary reform at a time when fear of all change was becoming more and more prevalent’.⁴² At this point, Georgiana agreed with Fox. She had tried to explain to Sheridan and Grey that to talk about parliamentary reform now would be to be suspected of spreading Revolutionary ideas.⁴³ Georgiana was right; as Derry points out, more conservative Whigs and all who were with Burke viewed this society as proof that the Foxite Whigs had become the followers of radicalism.⁴⁴ The conservative Whigs were more anxious at the spread of radicalism and reform movements than earlier and the Association was presented as a group of republicans who were ‘dedicated to the overthrow of property and the destruction of the constitution.’⁴⁵

Moreover, as Amanda Foreman emphasizes, although ‘Fox saw no threat in the revolution; she did. He thought England should make peace with France; she didn’t’.⁴⁶ Fox was by no means a democrat; he never stepped close to or agreed with Paine’s and other radicals’ ideas, although he helped them during their persecution by

⁴¹ For the introduction of the Association, see John Derry, ‘The Opposition Whigs and the French Revolution 1789-1815’, in *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815*, ed. H. T. Dickinson (London, 1989), p. 48.

⁴² Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, pp. 120-1.

⁴³ See Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London, 1999), pp. 287-9.

⁴⁴ Derry, ‘The Opposition Whigs and the French Revolution 1789-1815’, p. 49. See also Frank O’Gorman, *The Whig Party and the French Revolution* (London, 1967), ch. 3.

⁴⁵ O’Gorman, *The Whig Party*, p. 83.

⁴⁶ Foreman, *Georgiana* (London, 1999), p. 288.

Pitt's government from 1794.⁴⁷ He advocated political reform as a means to reduce the power of the king, and was far from wishing to sweep aside the traditional order. Nevertheless, Georgiana disagreed with Fox on his attitude towards the French. Throughout the Revolution, Fox tended to identify the French politicians with good Whigs, and thought, as Derry stresses, that the speedy resolution of constitutional problems would be a good stimulus to Britain.⁴⁸ For Georgiana, the Revolution was frightening. There was much which needed to be reformed in British parliamentary politics, but a revolution was far from a proper way to achieve this. Revolution, according to her personal experiences in France, overthrew the established institutions, and brought only cruelty and anarchy.

C. View from British Radicals

After the success of Helen Maria Williams' *Letters* in 1790 she brought out five more volumes of letters between 1792 and 1794. *Letters from France: Containing Many New Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution, and the Present State of French Manners* (1792) continually expressed her great enthusiasm and optimism for the Revolution and celebrated the king's acceptance of the new constitution in September 1791. Meeting riots in the Parisian streets and witnessing the violent actions of the revolutionaries, she acknowledged some setbacks to the progress of the Revolution.

⁴⁷ For further details, see Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, pp. 150-7.

⁴⁸ Derry, 'The Opposition Whigs and the French Revolution 1789-1815', p. 49.

Nonetheless, she firmly adhered to the vision that Revolutionary France would triumph and its ideas of liberty and equality would finally spread across all Europe. Williams was not good at analyzing and bringing up political philosophy like her radical friends such as Thomas Paine. Though meeting the chaos and crowd violence in Paris, she did not offer any analysis of the problems of the Revolutionary methods like other British radicals. Yet she expressed her fixed vision of utopia which would be reached through the course of the Revolution again and again.

In late 1792, she took up permanent residence in France, and her personal experiences were thus intertwined with the history of the French Revolution. Her own apartment on the Rue Helvétius became an important political and literary salon for French, British and American radicals between 1792 and her death in 1827. Most radical women covered in this thesis, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, the Russell sisters, Lady Elizabeth Holland, Ann Plumptre and Amelia Opie were Williams' guests at one time or another from 1790 to 1815. Mary Shelley intended to visit Williams in 1814 as well, but Williams was not in Paris at that time.⁴⁹ Among her other visitors were Thomas Paine, Thomas Christie, Charles James Fox, Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Joel Barlow, among others. As M. Ray Adams mentions, the list of her close friends in France in the early 1790s is virtually a list of the names of the leaders of the

⁴⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814-1844*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (2 vols., Oxford, 1987), i, p. 10.

Revolution.⁵⁰ While the Girondins were in power, the salons of Williams and of Madame Roland were among the leading places in Paris to pass and form opinions. 'The deputies of the Gironde and Barère passed most of their evenings at our house', Williams recorded in 1793.⁵¹ She had identified herself with the principles of the Girondins, which, in her view, were progressive yet moderate. She distinguished the Girondin Revolution (before 1792) from the Jacobin Terror. Like Wollstonecraft, Williams idealized her Girondin friends and believed that they were about to fulfil their principles not only in France but across Europe. Though shocked by the increasing violence in Paris, she continued to defend the meaning of the Revolution, to commit to the struggles of her Girondin friends such as Madame Roland, Pierre Verginaud, and J. P. Brissot, and to continue to speak up for her republican beliefs until her death in 1827.⁵²

Many of her liberal and radical friends, before the Terror, chose to forgive the imprudence and violence of revolutionaries, because it seemed an unavoidable process in establishing a new government, as well as an inevitable consequence of the oppression of the *ancien régime*. No matter whether they witnessed the Terror directly

⁵⁰ M. Ray Adams, 'Helen Maria Williams and the French Revolution', in *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Studies in Honor of George McLean Harper*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs, (Princeton, 1939), p. 90.

⁵¹ Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France, from the Thirty-first of May 1793, till the Twenty-eighth of July 1794, and of the Scenes which have Passed in the Prisons of Paris* (2 vols., London, 1795), i, pp. 170-1.

⁵² Nevertheless, Helen Maria Williams welcomed the restoration of the Bourbons in 1815. She finally thought that, it was not any Revolutionary government, but the liberal Louis XVIII who might defend the constitution and protect people's liberty.

or were among those who heard the news of the upheavals from Britain, however, many became pessimistic about the future of the Revolution in France and doubted the practice of democracy. The royal family's flight to Varennes in June 1791, the outbreak of war between France, Austria and Prussia in the spring of 1792, the overthrow of the French monarchy in August, the September Massacres, and the Reign of Terror, not to mention the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette: all these experiences persuaded the majority, including some liberal Whigs who had supported the Revolution, such as James Mackintosh and Anna Seward, to move incrementally towards agreement with Burke. Hence, Williams described how, since the king's execution, the overwhelming emotion of the world had rejected the reasoning of the head in calculating general good and evil, and 'melted in mournful sympathy over "greatness fallen from its high estate"'.⁵³

Some of those who had originally spurned the *Reflections* and thought Burke had gone mad, came to claim that Burke was right. In May 1791, Anna Seward (1742–1809), a well-known middle-class poet and critic, friend of Dr. Joseph Priestley and Helen Maria Williams, found that the *Reflections* were more persuasive than on her first reading in 1790. Seward had congratulated Williams on the success of her

⁵³ Helen Maria Williams, *Letters from France: Containing a Great Variety of Interesting and Original Information Concerning the Most Important Events that Have Lately Occurred in that Country, and Particularly Respecting the Campaign of 1792* (2 vols., London, 1793) i, p. 2.

Letters in 1790,⁵⁴ and admitted her initial reading of Burke's book had been with contempt because of his 'Quixotism' about Marie Antoinette.⁵⁵ She also hoped time would prove Burke's predictions to be groundless.⁵⁶ By mid-1791, however, Seward had changed her political attitudes. In her letter to Mrs. Knowles in 1791, Seward did not behold France emancipating itself from a tyrannous government: 'I soon began to apprehend that its deliverers were pushing the levelling principle into extremes more fatal to civilized liberty than even an arbitrary monarchy, with all its train of evils', she wrote.⁵⁷ Thus, the Revolution, which appealed to individual and natural rights, was actually unleashed without any social restraints, which would create a selfish and anarchic society.

Seward did not travel to France in the 1790s. But to understand the shift of her opinions about the Revolution provides a way of appreciating the political attitudes of these educated females in the 1790s. Seward had been a Whig and a sympathizer with the Protestant dissenters. She saw the apostate Whigs labouring to overturn the Revolutionary principles of liberty and equality, and to 'prove a king of England's right to reign despite the wills of his subjects with indignation'.⁵⁸ Yet she

⁵⁴ Anna Seward to Helen Maria Williams, 12 December 1790, in Anna Seward, *Letters of Anna Seward: Written between the Years 1784 and 1807*, ed. A. Constable (6 vols., Edinburgh, 1811), iii, pp. 44-6.

⁵⁵ See, for example, Anna Seward to Rev. T. S. Whalley, 19 December 1790, in *ibid.*, p. 46; Anna Seward to Mrs. Taylor, 10 January 1790, in *ibid.*, p. 52; and Anna Seward to Mrs. Knowles, 19 May 1791, in *ibid.*, p. 75.

⁵⁶ Anna Seward to Helen Maria Williams, 12 December 1790, in *ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵⁷ Anna Seward to Mrs. Knowles, 19 May 1791, in *ibid.*, p. 75.

⁵⁸ Anna Seward to Mrs. Knowles, 19 May 1791, in *ibid.*, pp. 75-6.

acknowledged that she also viewed the British constitution as a system of 'order' and 'polity', which appealed to 'the affections of the human bosom'.⁵⁹ The British constitution appeared to her more consonant with human nature, and less injurious to the public safety, than 'the levelling extreme into which French has rushed'.⁶⁰ James Mackintosh, still holding his undiminished love for liberty, began to feel disappointed about the excess of the Revolution and despaired of the Revolution after the September Massacres.⁶¹ Wollstonecraft, one of Williams' first British guests in Paris, arrived in France in the end of 1792 as we have seen with high expectations, but she could no longer retain her optimism towards the development of the Revolution after her personal experiences in Paris.

In response to this kind of emotion, Williams endeavoured to persuade her readers to consider the important consequences of the Revolution for the long-term development of humankind. One should not lament the 'individual sufferer' and forget to 'meditate upon the destiny of mankind', she proclaimed.⁶² The political climate in Britain turned decisively against the Revolution, however, when war was declared in February 1793. Williams' account could no longer touch the feelings of the British public. Adams points out that Williams was even misrepresented in the

⁵⁹ Anna Seward to Mrs. Knowles, 19 May 1791, in *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁶⁰ Anna Seward to Mrs. Knowles, 19 May 1791, in *ibid.*, p. 76.

⁶¹ James Mackintosh, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh*, ed. Robert James Mackintosh (2 vols., London, 1835), i, p. 84.

⁶² Williams, *Letters from France*, 1793, i, p. 2.

British press as an indifferent woman walking through the garden of the Tuileries and passing by the dead bodies of Swiss guards without horror.⁶³ Even the radicals or those who had supported the Revolution became disillusioned with its aggressive and despotic course. Anna Seward wrote to Williams '[f]ly ... that land of carnage' and was frightened that Williams should call 'the fire which led the French to the brink of that chaos into which they are fallen ... the rising sun of Liberty'.⁶⁴

Williams was by no means indifferent to the violence of the Jacobins. For her, the ideals of the Revolution were betrayed and corrupted in the hands of these demagogues, who committed more crimes than any despotism in any ages.⁶⁵ The constitutional monarchy was replaced after 10 August by a far more radical Jacobin administration, in which Robespierre, Danton, and Marat featured prominently. These ambitious men, in the opinion of Williams, were ignorant of the ideals of the Revolution. Revolutionary France was in a conflict between freedom and anarchy, knowledge and ignorance, virtue and vice. In the rest of the series of her *Letters* until the death of Robespierre, she turned her focus from distinguishing the *ancien régime* from the Revolution to distinguishing the Montagnards from the Girondins. She denounced the former, who destroyed the utopia the latter had been about to establish. While the Girondins, the 'real patriots of France', against the despotism of the *ancien*

⁶³ Adams, 'Helen Maria Williams', p. 104.

⁶⁴ Anna Seward to Helen Maria Williams, 19 January 1793, in Seward, *Letters*, iii, p. 208, p. 206.

⁶⁵ Williams, *Letters from France*, 1793, i, p. 4.

régime, ‘risked their lives’ and ‘shed their blood’ in order to win the liberty of their country,⁶⁶ a group of ambitious men, the wicked Jacobins, led by ‘Robespierre’, ‘Danton’ and ‘Marat’,⁶⁷ as she pointed out, ‘who exposed not their persons to the smallest danger in the enterprise’, contrived to seize power.⁶⁸ These Jacobins, according to Williams, have provoked crowd violence and stirred their passion for the principle of equality; they led people against every thing civilized and refined. Those who refused to use ‘the grossest language of the lowest vulgar’ or those who showed any ‘superiority of mind’ were in the danger of being considered as aristocrats.⁶⁹ As a result, she revealed her quasi-Burkean fear that the Jacobins’ policy and collective violence were degrading the highly enlightened French public culture into savages: ‘They desire to send the arts and sciences into everlasting exile, to the genius, to throw down all the monuments of taste and genius, and to destroy all literature in one impious conflagration’.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, Williams firmly assured her readers that the anarchy in France was a temporary, violent torrent and, as the love of liberty still existed in France, so the progress of the Revolution would not stop.⁷¹

Residing in Paris, corresponding with her British radical friends, she had been aware of the strong influence of Burke and had opposed his political philosophy. In

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

her poem *To Dr. Moore, in answer to a Poetic Epistle Written by Him in Wales*, written in 1792, she refuted Burkean attacks on the Revolution and rhapsodized on the spirit of the Revolution in France: ‘The temple’ of the new government was a ‘glorious triumph of mankind’ and would be ‘a mansion worthy of the human race’.⁷²

The final letter of *Letters from France: Containing a Great Variety of Interesting and Original Information Concerning the Most Important Events that Have Lately Occurred in that Country, and Particularly Respecting the Campaign of 1792*, ii, criticized Burke’s prophecy of his *Reflections*.⁷³ Her attack on Burke was mainly on Burke’s inflammatory predictions of the violent course of the Revolution, which actually fostered the evils he feared. As she stressed, at the time of the publication of the *Reflections*, nobody had such idea in his mind, but, Burke’s imagination of the distress of the royalty contributed to the death of Louis XVI and the downfall of the monarchy.⁷⁴ But for Burke and his associates’ agitation, as Williams maintained, Louis XVI might have been reigning peacefully on his throne.⁷⁵ She therefore alleged that the success of Burke’s writing brought sad effects to both the court and the Revolution, for ‘the court [became] discontented with the revolution, and the nation

⁷² *The New Penguin Book of Romantic Poetry*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth and Jessica Wordsworth (London, 2001), p. 626.

⁷³ Helen Maria Williams, *Letters from France: Containing a Great Variety of Interesting and Original Information Concerning the Most Important Events that Have Lately Occurred in that Country, and Particularly Respecting the Campaign of 1792* (2 vols., London, 1793) ii, p. 214.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

suspicious of the court'.⁷⁶ Williams did not anticipate the violent energy of the Revolution that was released by the revolutionaries. As Schama suggests, since 1789, even before that, 'it had been the willingness of politicians to exploit either the threat or the fact of violence that had given them the power to challenge constituted authority'.⁷⁷ Those who profited from progress by violence or arms would disarm those who empowered them. Yet events developed far beyond the expectation of those temporary winners: they soon became prisoners in the next stage of the Revolution.⁷⁸ But for Burke, Louis XVI would lose his throne in the development of the Revolution, and the king and the Girondins would probably still be executed in the successive events.

This letter continued to empathize with the prospects of this groundbreaking Revolution made by her Girondin friends, which was for the first time to declare aloud in the name of twenty-five million men and women, and to dare to combat 'all errors' and publish the 'complete manifesto of the neglected rights of human kind'.⁷⁹ At this moment, most British people became doubtful of the possibility of this new government of France, and tended to agree with Burke that this brand new nation, constructed according to abstract principles, without any convention, experience and

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

⁷⁷ Schama, *Citizens*, p. 523.

⁷⁸ As Schama writes, 'The French Revolution had, from 1788 onward, been made possible by force of arms, by violence and riot. At each stage of its progress those who had profited from its force sought to disarm those had put them in power. And at each successive stage they became, in turn, prisoners rather than beneficiaries', *ibid.*, p. 618.

⁷⁹ Williams, *Letters*, 1793, ii, p. 265.

proper restraint, would lead to nowhere but savagery, anarchy and war. Williams had heard of the radical responses to Burke by Paine, Mackintosh, Christie, Wollstonecraft, Macaulay, among others,⁸⁰ and she, always optimistic, believed these writers ‘made a powerful impression on the thinking part of the English nation’, thus ‘the momentary effect of Mr. Burke’s eloquence was effaced.’⁸¹ All in all, to Williams, though the Revolution now fell into the hands of the Montagnards and produced confusion and vice, these were unpleasant by-products or effects of it. The foundation of the Revolution would not be shaken and the *ancien régime* would not be rebuilt in France.⁸² She concluded her fourth volume of *Letters from France* with the conviction that this Revolution would finally bring general happiness to all human beings.

In her two volumes of *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France, from the Thirty-first of May 1793, till the Twenty-eighth of July 1794, and of the Scenes which have Passed in the Prisons of Paris*, Williams continued to denounce the violent and bloody turn of the Revolution during the Reign of Terror due to the Montagnards, and lamented the death of the Girondins in the early phase of the French Revolution.⁸³ Williams suffered personally during the reign of Robespierre and the Jacobins. By June 1793, the Girondins had been expelled from the National

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 218-20.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 220.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁸³ Fraistat and Lanser, *Letters Written in France*, Appendix A, pp. 173-4.

Convention and many were arrested. In 9 October of the same year the edict that forbade all foreigners to remain in Paris was issued.⁸⁴ Thus, Williams' friendship with the Girondins and her British identity made her suspect to the Jacobins. She was arrested and imprisoned in the Luxembourg Prison, like Thomas Paine, for six weeks.⁸⁵ A Burkean fear of anarchy and crowd violence is revealed in these two volumes of work. She continued to condemn the abuse of power by Robespierre, Marat and Danton, and ignorant violent riots. Recollecting Burke's words written in the beginning of the Revolution, she wrote: 'In the groves of their academy, at the end of every vista I see the gallows!' Williams lamented the fate of the Revolution and the deaths of her friends, and was reluctant to concede the situation of France was as gloomy as Burke had anticipated: 'Ah Liberty! best friend of mankind, why have sanguinary monsters profaned thy name, and fulfilled this gloomy prediction!'⁸⁶ To Williams, the early phase of the Revolution, with liberty and enlightened philosophy its foundations, instantly affected all Europe and was poised to change the governments of other European countries. Yet it had fallen into 'the hands of monsters', who had no idea about the charms of its initial principles. The Revolution was transformed into a 'fury', which had driven France into a region of guilt and

⁸⁴ For the details of the decree, see Michael Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship in Revolutionary France: the Treatment of Foreigners 1789-1799* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 200-1.

⁸⁵ Helen Maria Williams, *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France, from the Thirty-first of May 1793, till the Twenty-eighth of July 1794, and of the Scenes which have Passed in the Prisons of Paris* (2 vols., London, 1795) i, p. 17.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, p. 90.

horror.⁸⁷ Williams tried hard to make the Girondins icons and martyrs of the Revolution, who, after the ‘honourable struggles for their country’, shed their blood for liberty.⁸⁸ They represented the true meaning of the Revolution, claimed Williams, and history would not forget their contribution to the progress of human civilization.⁸⁹ As long as the ideals of the Girondins were remembered, her enthusiasm for the possibilities of the Revolution remained undiminished. While ending her account of the French events with the execution of Robespierre, therefore, Williams concluded her first six series of *Letters* in optimistic tones by writing that the French had begun to learn wisdom from the things they had suffered. They had reached the end of the gloomy period and dawn was coming. She believed that the Revolution would proceed in the right direction led by its glorious principle of liberty.⁹⁰

This abiding enthusiasm for the Revolution made Williams a singular character after 1794. During the course of the Terror, many radical literary figures in Britain, who had at first responded passionately to the French Revolution, had changed their political opinions. An example is Wollstonecraft, who was repulsed by the bloodshed in Paris and the aggressiveness and selfishness of the revolutionaries, and wondered what degree of social reform this political revolution would bring. Wordsworth and Coleridge, who had shared the enthusiasm for the French Revolution, now began to

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 213-14.

doubt the benefits of this Revolution. They had not yet abandoned their republican ideals, but they preferred more gradual and moderate reform methods carried out in the existing state of society.⁹¹ According to Wollstonecraft, this Revolution, with the wrong method and process, was deemed to have failed in France, because the French people were not ready for change. Now she also felt uncertain that the change of political system would bring social progress. Hence, after 1795, she believed that to educate societies according to their different situations, was a more practical and basic way of progressing. Helen Maria Williams showed her disgust at the Terror and at the Montagnards, and was disappointed at the gloomy turn of the Revolution. Lamenting those Girondins who shed their blood for the ideals of the Revolution during the Terror, she kept her faith that the noble spirit of the Girondins would be remembered, and, with the death of Robespierre, the French would learn the lessons from the Terror and realize the Revolutionary principles in the end.

In conclusion, this chapter has argued that, from the September Massacres of 1792 to the death of Robespierre in 1794, the political opinions of most Britons turned conservative, and this attitude was also reflected in British women's travel accounts, with the notable exception of Helen Maria Williams. Moreover, Burke's works had

⁹¹ For the details of the political views of Wordsworth and Coleridge, see Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: the Radical Years* (Oxford, 1988); A. S. Byatt, *Unruly Times: Wordsworth and Coleridge in their Time* (London, 1989), especially ch. 4 'Political views'; Iain Robertson Scott, "'Things As They Are': The Literary Response to the French Revolution 1789-1815", in *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815*, ed. H. T. Dickinson (London, 1989), pp. 229-49.

exercised a pervasive influence on the British people. Many female royalists and Whigs took a Burkean view, especially of Marie Antoinette, who symbolized the highly civilized culture of the *ancien régime* as well as the dignity of it. The beautiful and amiable queen was brutally treated at the hands of the wicked Jacobins, who were represented as a literal death of civilization. Furthermore, British female travellers' recognition of the benefits provided by the existing British constitution became even firmer as they witnessed the devastation caused by the Revolution.

Most British radicals, although the Reign of the Terror had ended, became irrevocably disillusioned with the French Revolution. Burke's work showed its influence on this circle of people as well. Some of them, like Wollstonecraft, still supported the ideal of a democratic state, but believed that this ideal state should develop naturally and not violently, from the existing state of society. Instead of stressing abstract and absolute freedom, Wollstonecraft stressed the means of improving the morality of the people and cultivating democratic ideals in society. Despite a fundamental difference in their political philosophy, most of the radical writers tended to agree with Burke that the methods of the Revolution were wrong, and they preferred more moderate and gradual reform. Helen Maria Williams, however, unlike most British radicals at this period, kept her belief that the French Revolution would finally be judged a success by the turn of century.

CHAPTER 6

THE REVOLUTION CONTROVERSY (III): A CASE STUDY OF THE RUSSELL SISTERS

On 21 October 1789, Dr. Joseph Priestley wrote to Adam Walker about recent events which had happened in France: ‘There is indeed glorious prospect for mankind before us. Flanders seems to be quite ripe for a similar revolution; and other countries, I hope, will follow in due time; and when civil tyranny is all at an end, that of the [Anglican] church will soon be disposed of.’¹ In late 1790, Dr. Priestley wrote repeatedly to his friends predicting that the Revolutionary ideals would spread to other countries and the French example would be followed. He believed, ‘whatever is *true* and *right* will finally prevail’.² On 22 August 1791, Dr. Priestley’s letter to the Chairman of the Committee of the Revolution Society expressed his defence of the French Revolution: ‘Violence is temporary, but truth is eternal.’³ At the same time, his and his radical friends’ daily lives became difficult and dangerous in the early 1790s. During the Birmingham Riots of 1791, ‘Church and King’ mobs attacked the houses of notable sympathizers of the French Revolution.⁴ The house of the Priestley family was

¹ Dr Joseph Priestley to Mr. Adam Walker, Birmingham, 21 October 1789, in Joseph Priestley, *Life and Correspondence of Joseph Priestley*, ed. J. T. Rutt (2 vols., London, 1831), ii, p. 38.

² Dr. Priestley to Condorcet, post 30 July 1791, in *ibid.*, p. 130.

³ Dr. Priestley to the Chairman of the Committee of the Revolution Society, Tottenham, 22 August 1791, in *ibid.*, p. 146.

⁴ For the details of the Birmingham Riots of 1791, see R. B. Rose, ‘The Priestley Riots of 1791’, in *Past and Present*, 18 (1960), 68-88.

destroyed on 14 July 1791.⁵ Like some of his radical friends, he began to think of emigration in June 1792 due to the persecution of radical dissenters in Britain. Yet France was not one of their choices of place to emigrate. Dr. Priestley wrote to his friend, William Russell, that France was not likely to be a desirable situation for any child of his.⁶ Apparently, he began to doubt the French and the methods of their Revolution in the second half of 1792. He also declined an invitation to become a member of the new National Convention. Moreover, from late 1792, penalties became harsher for those who spoke out against the government. John Reeves founded the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers on 20 November 1792, with the support of government ministers.⁷ Coffee houses and taverns began to refuse radical clubs permission to meet on their premises because they feared having their licences withdrawn by local magistrates. Radicals were regarded as allies of the French and traitors to their own country due to the war between Britain and France which began in 1793 and were condemned as dangerous demagogues. Such were the sentiments and the situation Dr. Priestley was experiencing in England between the fall of the Bastille and 1793.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁶ Dr. Priestley to William Russell, Clapton, 22 June 1792, in Priestley, *Life and Correspondence*, p. 185.

⁷ For the loyal association movement see Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country: the English Loyalists and the French Revolution* (Lexington, 1983). For John Reeves and the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, see *ibid.*, pp. 57-64. See also Dickinson, 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', pp. 503-33. For the conclusive evidence as to how far the government was involved in the Loyalist Association movement, see Michael Duffy, 'William Pitt and the Origins of the Loyalist Association Movement of 1792', *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), 943-62.

Martha Russell (1766-1807) and Mary Russell (1768-1839) shared the same enthusiasm for the Revolution and, as religious dissenters, experienced a similarly difficult situation in England in the early 1790s. The Russell family were friends of Dr. Priestley and many other members of the Lunar Society, and were active members of Dr. Priestley's nonconformist church. Their father's open support for the Revolution made them one of the targets during the Birmingham Riots in 1791, and their house in the neighbourhood of Birmingham was burned down.⁸ The pens of Martha and Mary would record their support for the dissenters' campaigns, sympathy with the Revolution, experiences as sufferers in the riots, their expectation of setting off to a more enlightened society in America, their experiences as captives in the hands of the French revolutionaries, and their disillusionment with the Revolution in Paris. Despite their zeal for republicanism, their lives were deeply affected by the vicissitudes of war and peace and the international conflict between Britain and France, and not only at the hands of the reactionary British populace. After leaving England, they even became prisoners of the Revolution which they had supported.

After the September Massacres took place in France in 1792, the prevailing British sentiment feared that the fire of the Revolution would spread to Britain and endanger its constitution. As H. T. Dickinson emphasizes, British radicals were

⁸ For Martha Russell's account of the Birmingham Riots in 1791, see Martha Russell, 'Martha Russell's Account of the Birmingham Riots of 1791', (Birmingham City Archives) MSS 486799. See also Rose, 'The Priestley Riots of 1791', 74.

deliberately misrepresented by loyalist propagandists as a group of demagogues who envied the governing class and men of property. The only Britons who would be seduced by such radicals were, according to the loyalists, 'the idle and the dissolute, the thieves, cheats, drunkards, and propertyless beggars of society.'⁹ Moreover, hatred of the French had been aroused especially after the outbreak of war between Britain and France after February 1793, and a deep abhorrence of British radicals was stirred because the radicals seemed willing to endorse the brutal example of the French. By the end of the Reign of Terror in late 1794, there were few in Britain who still supported the Revolution or believed that reform should extend to Britain, and those who were suspected of remaining radicals became the subject of official repression and popular suspicion.

Not surprisingly, many radicals considered emigrating either to France or to America, two countries which had promised universal liberty and general happiness through their revolutions, in contrast to what the radicals believed to be a hopelessly outdated British government which put civil rights under serious threat. As the situation in France deteriorated from the summer of 1792, however, many radicals thought the French would not achieve their Revolutionary ideals even by the early nineteenth century. These radical dissenters and progressive idealists decided

⁹ H. T. Dickinson, 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford, 1990), p. 512.

therefore to move to democratic America and to build an agrarian utopia based on their republican and egalitarian beliefs between 1794 and 1797. The Priestleys sailed from London to New York in April 1794, and the Russells (William Russell, his two daughters Martha and Mary, and his son Thomas) set off for America in August 1794. For them, the reason for emigration to America was not only to create a transatlantic utopia, but, more directly, to flee from oppression at the hands of reactionary anti-Jacobin movements in Britain. Dr. Priestley's decision to settle in America initiated widespread emigration among British radicals in the mid-1790s, and the 'New World' – America - became a popular asylum for radical emigrants. Hence, Charles Pigott defined the word 'emigrant' in his *A Political Dictionary* (1795) as 'one who, like Dr. Priestley or Thomas Cooper, is compelled to fly from persecution, and explore liberty in a far distant land, probably America, the states of Europe, for the most part, France excepted, being rank despotisms.'¹⁰ The definition of 'emigrant' in the late eighteenth century is similar to that of 'refugee' today.

However, the Russell family was captured by a French vessel in the first week of their journey to New England in 1794, and became prisoners of the Revolution for four months.¹¹ On Monday, 18 August, Martha was told by her brother that there was

¹⁰ Charles Pigott, *'A Political Dictionary Explaining the True Meaning of Word': a Facsimile of the 1795 Edition*, ed. Robert Rix (Aldershot, 2003), p. 17.

¹¹ Betty Haggund has written an essay about the Russell sisters' captivity. See Betty Haggund, 'Interrupted Travelling: The Captivity Diaries of Mary and Martha Russell', *Proceedings of Seuil & Traverses* 4, 2-4 July 2003, *University of Ankara*, ed. M. Emin Özcan (Ankara, 2004), pp. 235-41.

a French frigate, *Proserpine*, bearing down on their ship. As she wrote, she was pleased at the thought of seeing ‘the good Republicans’ and so she hastened to dress and ran up on deck. But Martha’s mood quickly fell from high spirits into an unexpected shock. They became prisoners of the French Revolution which they had previously supported and admired! The French officers demanded these British passengers’ passports, with which none of them had been provided. The French vessel took possession of the British ship because of their nationality and their lack of passports to America.¹² The political environment in France was extremely hostile to foreigners at this time. As we have seen, after 9 October 1793 all the Britons who were not resident in France before 1789 were to be held by the Convention as hostages; even simply using or wearing British products could lead to the possessor being considered a suspect. Days later the decree made no exception for foreign radicals who were previously protected by their political stance.¹³ Moreover, not only British but also American ships were detained.¹⁴

Thus, the Russells and their fellow passengers were all transferred to the *Proserpine*. Although the French revolutionaries on the *Proserpine* failed to bring them joy as they had expected, the French officers assured them that they would be

¹² Martha Russell, *Journal of a Tour to America in 1794 - 1795*, typescript, (3 vols., Birmingham City Archives) MSS 660349, i, pp.15-16.

¹³ See Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship*, pp. 200-1.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 240-1.

well treated and begged that they would not distress themselves.¹⁵ During their captivity, the British passengers were indeed treated humanely and politely.¹⁶ Frequently, the Russell sisters described extra privileges which they were given by the captain. The Russell sisters revealed their enthusiasm for the Revolution and seemed to get along with the French captors rather well. What they complained of was being captured, the loss of their liberty and the crowded noisy environment with other steerage prisoners.¹⁷ As Martha wrote, her family was asked to dinner with the officers, and they were taken care of in a very polite manner. Martha confessed that she began to feel more comfortable because of the great attention and tenderness of the officers.¹⁸

Compared with their father's serious depression and illness and their brother's illness with fever during their four months captivity,¹⁹ the sisters' healthy physical and emotional states allowed them to learn and observe some interesting characters among these Frenchmen. They noticed the details of the Revolution from these officers and sailors, such as the singing of the Marseillaise, the political decoration of the dining room, the ardour for the Revolution expressed by these officers, and indeed

¹⁵ For example, Martha wrote, 'The young man who spoke english accompanied us, & appeared to be humane & kind - he assured us we shd be well treated, & begged we wd not distress ourselves', Martha Russell, *Journal*, i, p. 17.

¹⁶ Mary Russell, *Journal of a Tour to America in 1794 - 1795*, typescript, (2 vols., Birmingham City Archives) MSS 660357, i, pp. 9-10.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 9-11, 41-2.

¹⁸ See Martha Russell, *Journal*, i, pp. 19-20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 70, 87; Mary Russell, *Journal*, i, p. 41, 44.

the polite and cheerful manner of the Frenchmen at the dinner table.²⁰ Unlike most Britons at this time, who viewed the French revolutionaries as enemies and monsters, the Russell sisters regarded the French as friends. Although French culture and manners had a considerable influence on upper-class Britons,²¹ there had been a tradition of putting down the French and characterizing them as effusive, lighthearted, shallow, changeable, slavish, and artful before 1789.²² After 1793, British public sentiment would adopt an even more negative view of the French. The Terror made the French murderous potential invaders. In general terms, most Britons therefore denied the French any positive characteristics. Unlike most of their fellow countrymen, however, Martha and Mary brought curious minds and eyes to observe these French officers without prejudice and, it appears that they were the only two passengers on board who could do so. Even their father with his firm belief in the Revolution could not overcome his severe distress.

Of course, as upper middle-class Britons, the Russell sisters could not bear the poor quality of the prisoners' living environment. Mary complained about the dirty, narrow and dark cabin, poor tea without milk and dry bread, and the scarcity of soap.²³ Martha wrote that she would never forget her feelings on finding herself on

²⁰ See, for example, Martha Russell, *Journal*, i, p. 20, 21, 33-5; Mary Russell, *Journal*, i, pp. 9-10, 11.

²¹ See Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Culture History 1740-1830* (New York, 1997), chs. 1 and 2.

²² See *ibid.*, ch. 4.

²³ Mary Russell, *Journal*, i, p. 10, 11, 42.

the vessel among three hundred dirty, filthy, ragged-looking sailors.²⁴ According to their diaries, the sisters viewed themselves as above the other prisoners, passengers, and ordinary sailors, and on a level with the captain and officers. Here we can catch an interesting phenomenon as Betty Hagglund has pointed out: Martha and Mary were prisoners, but they seemed able to sympathize with the political sentiments and ardour of their captors more than with the society they had just left behind in England or with the prisoners on board.²⁵ Thus, despite their actual situation as captives, they shared the mentality of their captors, although, in their diaries, they complained about their forlorn and sad situation in captivity and feared to think about what would come of it. In fact, besides their confinement on the frigate and the bad quality of life on board, they were treated kindly, and their opinion of these Frenchmen was not negative either. Hence, they identified themselves as upper middle-class radicals; those with whom they sympathized most were well-educated, decent, and polite revolutionaries. Nationality did not matter much for them, or so it appears.

On 1 September 1794, the *Proserpine* entered Brest harbour. The Russells were very excited that they were about to see France, 'the Land of Liberty'.²⁶ Martha wrote: 'The scene which the harbour presented was novel and highly gratifying to me, such a number of fine ships of war crowded with men, all of whom hailed us with

²⁴ Martha Russell, *Journal*, i, p.17.

²⁵ Hagglund, 'Interrupted Travelling': The Captivity Diaries of Mary and Martha Russell', p. 238.

²⁶ Martha Russell, *Journal*, i, p. 33.

“Vive la republick” as we passed.’²⁷ Like the scene on board the *Proserpine*, where all the men as well as officers seemed to be as one family of brothers, and like the ardour they all expressed in the cause of liberty, the French people they met in the harbour expressed a passion for the Revolution. Seeing these people and war vessels made Martha believe that the ideal of liberty was the only thing for which they wished to live, and the only cause for which they wished to die; all their religion was for liberty. The enthusiasm was so great that it seemed to Martha that these people could never be conquered, and that they must conquer all they attempted.²⁸

In December 1794, another British vessel was captured and the British sailors were brought on board. Martha described how this ‘desperate set of fellows’ obliged her family and the others to take off their pro-revolutionary cockades.²⁹ The Russells were reluctant ‘to submit to English tyranny in France’.³⁰ At last the sisters took their cockades off, but they hardly dared to go on deck with the British sailors for fear of their insults. Their father continued obstinately to refuse to take off his cockade until they threatened to throw him overboard if he did not do so. Others begged him not to wear ‘the colour of his country’s enemy’.³¹ William, however, remonstrated with them, saying that England was no longer his country. France was a friend to America,

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

and his principles led him to admire the French government. Their party became uneasy, however, fearing William's persistence might bring trouble on them all. He, therefore, to relieve them, took off the cockade.³² Such was the political position of the Russell family. Martha further described the above-mentioned event by adding that soon after these British sailors came on board, they made other prisoners feel under the military discipline of their own country and grouped the loosely-organized prisoners against their 'national enemy' so that the French were 'in awe of them [the British]'.³³ Thus, the Russells were not only patriotic radicals, who defended liberty against the corrupt establishment, but were also cosmopolitans, since they were the friends of both the Americans and the French. Whereas more and more British people, owing to the violent development of the Revolution and the loyalist propaganda which appealed to patriotism and anti-Gallicanism, were persuaded to believe they were fighting for liberty, British radicals such as the Russell family still considered the British government as a source of oppression, injustice and tyranny. The Russells' close relationship with the French officers further caused them to be seen by the other prisoners as traitors to their own country.

The Russells were finally freed on 23 December 1794. They started their journey from Brest to Paris on 30 December. On the road, they passed by several

³² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

cottages in a very poor condition. 'These miserable habitants', as Mary wrote, 'shewed in a very striking manner the effects of the shocking despotism that reigned here before the revolution- & I cou'd not but look forwards with the sincerest pleasure to that happy period when the brave defenders & assertors of the liberties of their country shd return to the bosom of their families & peace again raise her head'.³⁴ Mary believed that in a few years these unhappy people who were formerly slaves of tyrants would all have equal rights and liberty.

On arriving in Paris, they anticipated not only a city of history, culture and beauty, but also a city undergoing the process of transformation into an enlightened state due to the recent great Revolution. On approaching Paris along the Rue St. Germain, Martha was amazed at the beauty and grandeur of it. This city, in her earliest impressions, was the centre and zenith of a magnificent world. Added to this, she wrote: 'As the scene where the great acts of the greatest revolutions had been transacted, made me quite amazed to reflect that I was approaching the spot & the people, of which, & of whom I had heard & read such astonishing things - I appeared to be in a dream rather than a reality.'³⁵

By this time, Martha and Mary had heard of and read about events and scenes such as the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the murders in the Reign of

³⁴ Mary Russell, *Journal*, i, p. 62.

³⁵ Martha Russell, *Journal*, ii, pp. 34-5.

Terror, and the worship of the Goddess of Reason. Like other British female radicals travelling to France with an express desire to witness this great age, they found the realities of Revolution to be more gruesome and distressing than originally conceived in the two sisters' reformist fantasies. Mary mentioned that the radical political writer and Unitarian, Thomas Cooper, had given her and her sister 'a very pleasing account of Paris' and had assured them that if they travelled to the Continent, they 'should be very comfortable in Paris'.³⁶ Cooper was a firm supporter of reform and a founder member of the Manchester Constitution Society.³⁷ During his four-month trip to Paris in the spring of 1792 with James Watt, son of the inventor, he had established contact with the Revolutionary societies of France and, together with Watt, was presented to Robespierre and the Jacobins.³⁸ Like his friend Dr. Priestley, he chose exile in America in 1794.³⁹ Thus, visiting Paris before the Reign of the Terror, Cooper's version of his Parisian tour must have been full of his radical enthusiasm for the Revolution. This was the story the Russell sisters chose to believe and were eager to witness. When talking about France at a distance Martha and Mary were able to follow the political thinking taught to them at an earlier age, to commend the concepts of the Revolution against royal and religious power, and to believe the significant

³⁶ Mary Russell, *Journal*, i, p. 71.

³⁷ Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: The English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 146.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 487.

progress this political reform would make towards a democratic society. As witnesses to the events in Paris, however, they were forced fearfully to accept that it was a bloodstained brutal city in a state of political near-anarchy and turmoil.

Martha and Mary were greatly disappointed by the lack of dignity at the Convention and Revolutionary Tribunal, and they became tired of the endless political conflict and disorder. Moreover, they were disgusted by the cruel, mean and dirty manners of the men they met in these places, which were very different from the kind and smooth manners of the naval officers they had met during their captivity. Martha recalled her experience in the Convention, with the comment that ‘the confusion, the noise, low language, the nervous attempt to overpower one another by the loudness of the voice in place of the strength of argument, the stamping, raving, & uncouth attitudes menacing each other with clenched fists’.⁴⁰ She went on: ‘It seem’d to me impossible that any business c[oul]d be there settled, particularly the business of a great Nation, & that this was the national Convention of [F]rance, of which I have read, & heard so much, appeared to be almost impossible.’⁴¹ We can tell from Martha’s account that she believed that the reality of republican ideas in France was unsatisfactory. The manners and characters of the French Jacobins in the Convention were, to her surprise, far from decent. She thought that a well-run Convention

⁴⁰ Martha Russell, *Journal*, ii, p. 36.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

required a group of officials with higher qualities.

Martha and her sister gained admittance to the Revolutionary Tribunal during the trial of Fouquier-Tinville, the former public prosecutor, and his accomplices.⁴² They were 'gratified as well as disgusted' at what they saw, for, as Martha explained, it was impossible to enter, without sensations of horror and disgust, the place where so many victims had heard their last sentence brutally pronounced.⁴³ After witnessing the Revolution at close quarters for months and continually hearing authentic accounts of the prevailing distress that were provided by such French friends as Mlle. Dulens, whose father was a member of the Faubourg Saint Antoine Section, they understood that hardship and sufferings were by no means confined to the lower classes. Some deputies and their wives had committed suicide during this period, they were informed.⁴⁴ The dismal histories which Martha and Mary were continually hearing and witnessing clearly disillusioned them. It was impossible that republican ideals could be fulfilled by these French Jacobins, they concluded. As with most people who had heard about or witnessed the Terror, they acknowledged that human conscience could not bear massacre, especially when it was done in the name of liberty. Mary confessed her revulsion at seeing Fouquier-Tinville in the Tribunal. She wrote that had she not herself heard from eyewitnesses of the distress they suffered,

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 43-6; Mary Russell, *Journal*, ii, p. 92.

⁴³ Martha Russell, *Journal*, ii, p. 43.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-4.

she would not have thought that human beings could have been so depraved and so totally devoid of every spark of humanity as Robespierre and Fouquier-Tinville had been.⁴⁵ As we can see, Paris was represented by the Russell sisters as a city filled with chaos, violence, death, which was not far from Burke's prediction of anarchy and barbarism. With an ambitious attempt to abolish the whole social order in 1789, the French were confronted with all kinds of possibilities, and, within the chaos, they endeavoured to construct new order according to their principles. In Robert Darnton's words, the French faced 'seemingly limitless possibilities, both for good and for evil, for raising a utopia and for falling back into tyranny.'⁴⁶ Before entering Paris, the Russells believed that the French were about to reach the state of utopia and true happiness. The fact was, however, that the city was worse beyond all imagination. The Russells blamed the Montagnards for making the Revolution degenerate into the Terror. For them, these Jacobins were monsters without any humanity. True, history should not forget the cruelty they had done; but they were not monsters killing enemies without aims, as many contemporary British people described. These revolutionaries intended to use terror to purify any impure social obstructions and to build a virtuous republic with liberty. They thought violent means was a necessary evil to destruct all corruptions and immoralities to reach the state of utopia. Yet, in the

⁴⁵ Mary Russell, *Journal*, i, p. 92.

⁴⁶ Robert Darnton, 'What was Revolutionary about the French Revolution?', in *The French Revolution in Social and Political Perspective*, ed. Peter Jones, (London, 1996), p. 19.

twenty-first-century sense, a liberal, humane and civilized government would, and should, not destroy different voices through the terror.

In addition, the Russell sisters' comments on the lower-class French were more negative than positive, though they never used any harsh words about these people. They condemned not only the brutal Jacobins, who abused the concepts of liberty, but also the ignorant people who cared for nothing but their own interests.⁴⁷ According to their diaries, they met some poor women during their stay in Paris. These women usually wanted food and they tended to dislike the Revolution. As Martha observed, the Revolution was blamed as a main reason for the scarcity of bread. She was a little surprised at this opinion and disagreed with it. She felt sorry when she met with so many poor people. From her point of view, however, it was the *ancien régime* that made so many people live in poverty.⁴⁸ Like other radicals, they denounced the *ancien régime*, whose tyranny and despotism made many miserable people. Those radicals who visited France, though condemning the Jacobins, seemed unwilling to recognize that the revolutionaries failed to improve the living condition of the common people. Likewise, while imputing blame to the *ancien régime*, Martha ignored the fact that the drought and poor harvest of 1794, the extremely cold winter of 1794-1795 and the high price of bread all drove the angry Parisians to cry out for

⁴⁷ Martha Russell, *Journal*, ii, pp. 50-1

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-1

food. The revolutionaries could not do much to make things any better and instead they tried to channel the popular anger into cries for vengeance against the terrorists.

Moreover, Martha criticized that the poor for not understanding the virtuous Revolutionary ideals such as liberty; what they cared about was their physical difficulties.⁴⁹ Like Mary Shelley, whom I shall discuss later, the Russell sisters thought that the populace had to take some responsibility for the excess of the Revolution. Mary mentioned that she went once with her sister to see the guillotine erected for an execution.⁵⁰ They thrilled with horror at beholding the blade which deprived so many innocent fellow-creatures of existence. Then they walked away to avoid the execution. To their distress, they met the poor victim going in a cart, with his neck shaved. She wrote: 'we were not only hurt by seeing the poor man that was to be soon launched into eternity, but also by meeting such throngs of people going with the greatest gaiety to witness the execution.'⁵¹ Thus, in my view, Martha and Mary implied that the spectators lacked knowledge of the true ideals of the Revolution and the proper cultivation of the mind, so it was impossible for these insincere and ignorant people to make correct judgments on matters pertaining to politics and law. These were Martha and Mary's observations on the Revolution. Since the Russell sister did not discuss this matter further, we can hazard a guess at

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁵⁰ Mary Russell, *Journal*, i, p. 92.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 92.

their attitudes towards the commoners in two respects. First, like Wollstonecraft, as we have seen in Chapter 3, they might point out that it would be difficult to fulfil the goal of the Revolution in a nation whose people had not yet developed adequate knowledge of Revolutionary principles and sound judgment. Or, in a second version, their experience might result in a mistrust of popular participation in politics and thus support for only a restrictive suffrage. Otherwise, the potential danger of popular violence still remained.

The Russell family met Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams socially on several occasions in Paris in 1795.⁵² The place the Russells stayed was very near to that of Wollstonecraft. On several afternoons, they walked through gardens and chatted together.⁵³ The Russell sisters, however, neither recorded the details of their talks, nor did they pass any comment on Wollstonecraft's works. Martha only noted that Wollstonecraft was writing a book about the history of the French Revolution. As a matter of fact, both Martha and Mary failed to discuss politics deeply in their diaries, nor did they write about their vision of the future perfectibility of France and of the world, which were the subjects most intellectuals were writing about around the end of the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, we can be sure that, although the Russell sisters were the prisoners of the Revolution at sea, condemned the Terror, and were

⁵² See Martha Russell, *Journal*, ii, p. 18, 19, 42; Mary Russell, *Journal*, ii, p. 3. Mary Wollstonecraft was called 'Mrs. Imlay' by the Russell sisters.

⁵³ Martha Russell, *Journal*, ii, p. 18, 42; Mary Russell, *Journal*, ii, p. 3.

disillusioned with Revolutionary France, they had never agreed with Burke's claim that violence and destruction were the essence of the French Revolution and anarchy and terror were the last terminal phase of democratic politics. Whereas Burke saw the advent of democracy in the Revolution as a process leading to the collapse of civilization, the Russell sisters supported the opinion of Wollstonecraft and other British radicals that the *ancien régime*, like the British monarchy, was corrupted and outdated, and hence the French Revolution was a huge step towards an enlightened world. Despite their disgust at the Terror, they expressed optimism about the future of the French nation on leaving this country.⁵⁴

Before arriving in Paris, Martha and Mary had been eager to witness an enlightened society, which they believed to have been realized with the progress of the Revolutionary movement. During these months, however, all they experienced was a disordered society stained with the blood of innocents. In reality, Paris was not in a land of liberty as they had thought. To the Russell sisters, the wicked and ambitious French Jacobins and the ignorant people, none of whom understood the true meaning of liberty, abused the principles of the Revolution and led it into disastrous ways. In their view, the Jacobins employed the wrong methods in order to gain their political goals and the ignorant people just followed others blindly, crowding and

⁵⁴ Mary Russell, *Journal*, ii, pp. 95-6.

watching executions with gaiety, or else rejecting the ideals of the Revolution because of personal difficulties. After the spring of 1795, Mary's hopes for the Revolution increased slightly, because '[the French] move by degrees to be recovered from the times of terror during the reign of Robespierre when every one was fearful not only appearing smart but even clean.'⁵⁵

Originally, William Russell intended to stay in Paris till the autumn of 1795, but he had completed his business by midsummer, and his family believed that they had seen enough in Revolutionary France and were eager to resume their journey to America in the hope of finding an enlightened society. On 20 June 1795, the Russell family left Paris at four o'clock in the morning. Passing by the Place de la Revolution where thousands had been guillotined, Martha concluded that 'I felt there was but little regret to be found in my bosom on leaving this people, of whom my ideas were somewhat changed since we first entered this City'.⁵⁶ While still subscribing to republicanism, they expressed their revulsion at the violent acts of the Jacobins and the mob. Revolutionary France had disappointed them deeply, but it had not fully disillusioned them. By the time they left Paris, their hopes for Revolutionary France had been a little restored.

Did the Russells feel satisfied with the environment of the New World? The

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, ii, p. 96.

⁵⁶ Martha Russell, *Journal*, iii, part 2, p. 1.

family settled down in Middletown, Connecticut. Their lives were still affected by international strife. Relations between France and America worsened towards the end of the 1790s during the Adams presidency, and the French-American strategic alliance was over by 1798. As a result, there developed an anti-revolutionary and xenophobic mood in American society. In Middletown, The Russells' most close friends were French settlers.⁵⁷ Their sympathy and association with French residents incurred local hostility. They became estranged from some of their American neighbours and gained little relief from the narrowness of thought and religious intolerance they encountered in rural America.⁵⁸ Dr. Priestley, who had settled in Pennsylvania and had got in touch with the Russells again, also wrote about his isolation in society, and the great aversion prevailing towards the radical emigrants from England. As he wrote to Rev. T. Lindsey, in July 1795, 'Here I feel, and always shall, as a stranger, and indeed have no intention to be naturalized. The present governing powers have shewn a ridiculous jealousy of democratical emigrants, and, from a dread of them, as Mr. Adams acknowledges to me, they have in the last congress, made naturalization more difficult than before.'⁵⁹ In September 1798, he wrote, 'Though I have no more to do with the

⁵⁷ See S. H. Jeyes, *The Russells of Birmingham in the French Revolution and in America, 1791-1814* (London, 1911), p. 271.

⁵⁸ See Jeyes, *The Russells*, pp. 256-76.

⁵⁹ Dr. Priestley to Rev. T. Lindsey, Northumberland, 12 July 1795, in Priestley, *Life and Correspondence*, ii, p. 312. He expressed this situation to William Russell in 10 November 1795, in *ibid.*, pp. 321-2. In April 1797, he wrote to Rev. T. Lindsey, '... I am sorry to see a dislike to France prevail so generally ...', in *ibid.*, p. 377. See also Dr. Priestley to Mr. J. H. Stone, Northumberland, 20 January 1798, in *ibid.* p. 393.

politics of this country than you have, so violent, is party spirit, that if there to be not a change soon, I cannot expect to live in peace here'.⁶⁰ In October of the same year, Dr. Priestley wrote to R. T. Belsham, 'The change [the aversion to British radical dissenters] that has taken place is indeed hardly credible, as I have done nothing to provoke resentment; but being a citizen of France, and a friend to that revolution, is sufficient'.⁶¹ The Russell family thus could scarcely do other than to withdraw from the social life of their town in order to live in peace. Indeed, they felt disappointed about the narrow-minded people they met in America.⁶² They became tired of their retired life in Middletown – the family had been used to their politically and socially active life in radical circles and societies either in Britain or in France. William Russell therefore made up his mind to voyage to France in late 1799,⁶³ and his children decided to return to England. Dr. Priestley rejected William's invitation to travel this time, because he knew he was too old to set off on a long journey now – he was over sixty-five years old in now.⁶⁴ After Martha's marriage to James Skey, therefore, she returned to England with her husband in 1799 and remained there for the rest of her life.⁶⁵ Mary and her brother Thomas sailed for England two years later;

⁶⁰ Dr. Priestley to Rev. T. Lindsey, Northumberland, 6 September 1798, in *ibid.*, p. 407.

⁶¹ Dr. Priestley to Rev. T. Belsham, Northumberland, 25 October 1798, in *ibid.*, p. 408.

⁶² Jeyes, *The Russells*, p. 272.

⁶³ Dr. Priestley mentioned that William Russell would not continue to stay in America in his letter to Rev. T. Lindsey, Northumberland, 6 June 1799, in Priestley, *Life and Correspondence*, ii, p. 419.

⁶⁴ Dr. Priestley to William Russell, Northumberland, 7 February 1800, in *ibid.*, p. 427.

⁶⁵ Jeyes, *The Russells*, pp. 273-4.

in the same year that their father William left for France.⁶⁶ Yet due to his complicated legal position as well as the resumption of war between France and Britain after May 1803, William would not return to England until 1814.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 276-7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 277-98.

CHAPTER 7

THE REVOLUTION CONTROVERSY (IV): 1794-1802

We have explored British women travellers' reflections on the French Revolution in the early 1790s in previous four chapters. This chapter now aims to discuss the British female travellers' debate on 'the Revolution controversy' in the later period from 1794 to 1802, and the character of British patriotism and national consciousness in these women's writings. As I have argued in the previous chapters, the British government and British conservatives had been endeavouring to promote an admiration for the British constitution during the 1790s by means of all kinds of propaganda. Radical dissenters and those writers who had supported republican ideals found themselves harshly rejected by the majority of the people. Professor H. T. Dickinson maintains in his *Liberty and Property* that, 'Although the reformers in Britain developed an increasingly radical programme between the 1760s and the 1790s they failed to carry through any important political changes.'¹ Most radicals did not propose a violent revolution and they believed that, as Dickinson suggests, they could persuade the governing class to accept an extensive political reform.² However, the Terror and the outbreak of war between France and Britain in 1793 meant that the British radicals had little chance of implementing their proposals. The

¹ H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property: Political Ideology in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1977), p. 270.

² *Ibid.*, p. 265.

propertied classes would not give up the existing political order or accept a radical reform, the more so after they witnessed the chaotic and violent situation in France. Moreover, as Dickinson points out, 'the radicals had neither massive popular support nor an effective political organization capable of seizing power; whereas their conservative opponents possessed considerable power and were ready to use it.'³ The Terror and the war provoked a series of fatal attacks against British radicals; the turmoil provided the governing class with justification for a strong policy of repression which almost destroyed any radical movements by 1800.⁴

Many British radicals and radically-inclined writers were disappointed at the aggressive and oppressive outcome of the French Revolution, especially after the declaration of war between Britain and France in 1793. They were impelled to re-examine their previously-declared republicanism and rational philosophy. The war quickened this process of re-examination. Although the reign of Robespierre ended in July 1794, few radicals had confidence that the French would regain their republican ideals under new leadership. For them, time proved that the French revolutionaries, far from bringing liberty to France and peace to Europe as they had promised, instead endangered the stability and harmony of all Europe by successive wars.

As the writings of the female radical travellers have shown, a more pragmatic

³ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 270-1.

form of political thinking was therefore developed among radical writers in this period, whereby, in the words of Iain Robertson Scott, ‘Out of this dilemma [whether to remain faithful to republican principles, or to follow their patriotic feelings for Britain during the war] was born a less rational, more pragmatic, political philosophy; one which sought to reconcile republican ideals with the more complex realities of the everyday world, which they now perceived.’⁵ As this thesis has argued, while Martha and Mary Russell acknowledged the limitations of the Revolution, Wollstonecraft started to think about how to establish republicanism more securely and practically. To continue my argument at the end of Chapter 5, some writers’ political ideas became rather similar to those of Wollstonecraft, and came to the view that it was the lack of firm understanding of republicanism among the French people which had led the Revolution to its disastrous outcome. Radicals did not now talk about abstract theory and the rational mind. Instead, they stressed ordinary people’s moral feelings and thinking about how to modify and cultivate the common people’s minds and feelings on the basis of their everyday life. Wollstonecraft had written about these ideas of moderate and gradual reform and of education at the end of her *Letters Written during a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* in 1795. Had she lived longer after the birth of her second daughter, she would have continued to

⁵ Iain Robertson Scott, “‘Things As They Are’: The Literary Response to the French Revolution 1789-1815”, in *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815*, ed. H. T. Dickinson (London, 1989), p. 237.

propose reforms in education.⁶

Due to the war, fewer Britons ventured to France between 1794 and 1802. Most Britons in France were those who had remained there, or had been detained in France before 1793. Some of them were in France by chance, like the Russell sisters. There were some women who chose to visit Europe while bypassing France, yet they still made comments about the French and the Revolution in their travelogues. Although most British people became increasingly conservative during this period, the travel writings I have examined during this period were, generally speaking, written by those women who were radicals or were closer to reform and republicanism, such as the Russells, Ann Radcliffe, and the anonymous 'Lady', who wrote *A Sketch of Modern France* during 1796 and 1797, not to mention Helen Maria Williams.⁷ They did not view the French as evil enemies and were willing to talk with them during their trips. Despite their support for Revolutionary ideals, however, they condemned the Montagnards and the Revolutionary crowds for the violent turn of the Revolution. They celebrated the early years of the Revolution when the Girondins were in power.

⁶ The reform of education, especially female education, had been a main concern of Wollstonecraft's writings. The unfinished projects she left at her death were both about child education. See also Alan Richardson, 'Mary Wollstonecraft on Education', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 24-41.

⁷ During this period Helen Maria Williams published *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Scenes which Passed in Various Departments of France during the Tyranny of Robespierre and of the Events which Took Place in Paris on the 28th of July 1795* (London, 1795); *Letters Containing a Sketch of the Politics of France, from the Twenty-eighth of July 1794, to the Establishment of the Constitution in 1795, and of the Scenes which have Passed in the Prisons of Paris* (London, 1796); *Tour in Switzerland*, 2 vols. (London, 1798); and *Sketches of the State of Manners and Opinions in the French Republic towards the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (2 vols., London, 1801). Generally speaking, she denounced the Terror, but never renounced her faith in the French Revolution from 1794 to 1802. Due to the limited space in this chapter, I shall not discuss Williams' voluminous works here.

When circumstances impelled the revolutionaries to take extreme methods to remove any 'impure social elements', British radicals retreated from the Revolution in its Montagnard version. Most important of all, unlike those female radicals who came to France before 1794 who all criticized the British government as corrupt, outdated and oppressive in this period, some of these radical or radically-inclined women revealed their loyalty to Britain in their travel writings and believed that the British constitution had defended people's liberty effectively.

British travellers were more eager than ever to emphasize their patriotic feelings and loyalty to their home country after the outbreak of war between Britain and France in 1793. As I shall further explain in this chapter, in discussing 'patriotic' and 'nationalist' sentiment at the end of the eighteenth century, it needs to be emphasized that the definition of the term 'patriotic' is highly ambiguous. The term which had belonged to those who supported reform and opposed the establishment was now appropriated by the loyalists who endeavoured to reinforce the established order. Not only because of loyalist propaganda, but also due to the war with Revolutionary France, many radically-inclined people now chose to follow their own natural patriotic feelings for Britain. Of course, democratic reforms were still required, but many believed, for the time being, they could only be accomplished by Britain. In contrast, in France, only when the French people's character was improved would the

reforms be possible. Some of them did not talk about political reform and absolute freedom anymore; instead, they appealed to people's moral sense, childlike enthusiasm for natural beauty and habitual feelings, and they found that the best form of life could and should develop in traditional society. I shall return to the topic of patriotism and national identity later in this chapter.

A. Political Responses to the French Revolution post-1794

1. Perspective from a Conservative Woman

The following work will show the influence of Burke's *Reflections* and of travel writings at the end of the eighteenth century. *A Residence in France, during the Years 1792, 1793, 1794, and 1795; described in a Series of Letters from an English Lady: with General and Incidental Remarks on the French Character and Manners* was published anonymously in 1797 in two volumes. The author claimed to have visited Paris and various provincial towns with her husband from 1792 to 1795, and she also claimed that this book had been '[p]repared for the press by John Gifford, Esq. Author of the History of France.'⁸ According to Emily Lorraine de Montluzin's *The Anti-Jacobins*, John Gifford (1758-1818) was the *Anti-Jacobin Review*'s arch-Tory editor and chief writer. His voluminous *History of France* (1791-4), with

⁸ Title-page of *An English Lady, A Residence in France, during the Years 1792, 1793, 1794, and 1795; described in a Series of Letters from an English Lady: with General and Incidental Remarks on the French Character and Manners* (2 vols., London, 1797).

anti-revolutionary bias, attracted the attention of Pitt's government.⁹ Thereafter, Montluzin points out, 'a number of anti-Jacobin and pro-government publications flowed from the fruitful union of Gifford and the Pitt Ministry – assorted Crown-and-Anchor pamphlets, translations or edited sets of memoirs related to the French Revolution'.¹⁰ The authenticity of the work has been doubted. The *Critical Review* stressed that whether the author was actually a lady was not known. It seems that because of Helen Maria Williams' successful volumes of travel letters, the author of *A Residence* thought 'none but a lady could write on the French Revolution'.¹¹ Moreover, according to the *Critical Review*, this work 'has every appearance of being, in part at least, composed after the events to which it relates. Every thing is foretold exactly as it happened; the reflections are, most of them, such as would be made at present, and in England, rather than in France, and at the moment of revolution which has mocked all human sight'.¹² Indeed, *A Residence* clearly aimed to bring out a prophetic work in the guise of a travelogue (to proclaim what the author said were truths) in order to carry the same influence as Burke's *Reflections* ('Mr. Burke has written ... truths Mr. Burke has shown himself a prophet'¹³). I strongly doubt whether the work was written before 1795, or even that the actual journey had ever

⁹ Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins, 1798-1800: The Early Contributors to Anti-Jacobin Review* (Basingstoke, 1988), pp. 93-5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹¹ *Critical Review*, 19(1797), p. 265, quoted in Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe 1750-1800: Authorship, Gender, and National Identity* (Aldershot, 2001), p. 210.

¹² *Critical Review*, 19(1797), pp. 266-7, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 210.

¹³ English Lady, *A Residence*, i, p. 248.

taken place. As a strict conservative, who had a profound loathing for the revolutionaries and feared these people would ‘pollute’ British people, would she (if it was a ‘she’) have visited France especially when the Revolution became more violent after 1792? And how was it possible that she still travelled around after October 1793, when the Revolutionary Convention had decreed the arrest of all British subjects in France? Instead of putting this work in Chapter 6: for the period 1792-1794, I therefore prefer to discuss it in this chapter..

The anonymous editor of *A Residence* wrote in the opening paragraph that this series of ‘important facts’, was ‘tending to throw a strong light on the internal state of France’, for the author feared the danger of the spread of Revolutionary ideas to Britain: ‘those pernicious principles which have already sapped the foundation of social order, destroyed the happiness of millions, and spread desolation and ruin over the finest country in Europe.’¹⁴ As this thesis has indicated earlier in Chapter 4, one of the purposes of Helen Maria Williams’ series of *Letters* was to correct the ‘false’ propaganda of the French Revolution in Britain made by the émigrés and by Burke, which might bring harmful influence to bear on the development of true liberty. In contrast, out of the same fear of the power of printing, the author of *A Residence* feared that the widespread seditious British press and the growth of popular

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Preliminary Remarks, pp. i-ii.

democratic societies in Britain, polluted by ‘Gallic licentiousness’, would endanger the true liberty of the existing British order. These publications and societies welcomed the establishment of the French republican state in 1792 had alarmed reactionaries and much of the propertied classes.¹⁵ Thus, *A Residence* aimed to exhibit ‘well-authenticated facts’ in order to correct the ‘misrepresentation’ of the radicals’ pamphlets and to defend Burke’s ideas by arousing her readers’ anti-French and anti-radical feelings.¹⁶ The book was dedicated to Burke. As the author wrote in the ‘Dedication to the Right Hon. Edmund Burke’, her work ‘describe[s] circumstances which more than justify Your own prophetic reflections, and are submitted to the public eye from no other motive than a love of truth and my country’.¹⁷ Influenced by Burke’s and other conservatives’ propaganda as well as the war between Britain and France, some travel writings written in this period wanted to stress their national prejudices and their loyalty to Britain.

In *A Residence*, the author disclosed no personal reason for travel or personal anecdotes during her travels. She developed no new viewpoints, but simply reinforced Burke’s argument. She foretold the downfall of the Girondins, the September Massacres, the executions of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the rise of a dictator, and many other events. Like Burke, whose *Reflections* were published in order to

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. iii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. iii.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

warn his British readers that the Revolution would destroy western civilization and what had happened in France might spread to Britain, the 'Lady' was eager to show the British 'facts', following Burke's analysis, that the Revolution had brought about nothing but barbarity and misery inflicted by despotic Republicans.¹⁸ She lamented the loss of the elegant and civilized *ancien régime*: 'For some years previous to the revolution, there were several points in which the French ascribed to themselves a superiority not very distant from perfection. Amongst these were philosophy, politeness, and the refinements of society, and, above all, the art of living.'¹⁹ These revolutionaries *unnaturally* abandoned their accumulated traditions and civilization; Enlightenment philosophy became 'a horrid compound of all that is offensive to Heaven, and disgraceful to man'.²⁰ Hence, the French were now rapidly declining and disgracing themselves: 'the manners of the nation [France] are corrupted, and its moral character is disgraced in the eyes of all Europe. A barbarous rage has laid waste the fairest monuments of art – whatever could embellish society, or contribute to soften existence, has disappeared under the reign of these modern Goths'.²¹ The French nation, instead of rising from tyranny to utopia as the radicals described, fell back from an enlightened state to barbarism. In contrast to Wollstonecraft's claim that

¹⁸ The author wrote, 'every day, by confirming Mr. Burke's assertions, or fulfilling his predictions, had so increased my reverence for the work, that I regarded it as a kind of political oracle', *ibid.*, p. 347.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 114-15.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, i, pp. 302-3.

a nation has to be constructed on the basis of liberty and equality, otherwise true and natural civilization could not develop; the work of the 'English Lady' was pretty much a re-writing of Burke's laments for the passing of the age of chivalry and his fear that the mob, with unrestrained freedom, had led the world into tyranny or anarchy and threatened to destroy the whole fabric of human society.

For her, the Revolutionary principles of the Girondins and the Montagnards were all the same: they did not respect the happiness and the rights of people; they were aggressive and regarded themselves as crusaders, eager to promote a universal revolution and overthrow the existing order of all Europe.²² While promising the people liberty, according to the author, their true welfare and liberty were actually disregarded.²³ At the same time, the revolutionaries lacked patriotism and humanity, argued the author, because they blindly supported the Revolution, which had given rise to so much injustice and bloodshed.²⁴ She stressed that the majority of the French, subdued by the few Jacobins, hated their government and expected a new constitution, representing 'men of honesty and property', to come to restore order and liberty, though she anticipated that it would be even more anarchical and tyrannical.²⁵ As she had observed, most French people wished for a new convention, which was

²² *Ibid.*, p. vi.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. v.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 487-8.

represented by those of honesty and property, and a new moderate government.²⁶ All in all, the author hinted that the French envied the British existing political order and government; yet, the Revolution would only degenerate into further despotism.

2. Perspective from a Radical Dissenter

Ann Radcliffe (*née* Ward, 1764-1823), one of the best-selling novelists at the end of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, travelled through Holland and Germany with her husband William Radcliffe in the summer of 1794 and published her travel journal, *A Journey made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the West Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine* in 1795. Despite her deliberately apolitical attitudes in her novels,²⁷ Radcliffe's works are permeated with progressive enlightenment values. From *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), *A Sicilian Romance* (1790) to *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), her plots asserted traditional values such as honour and integrity while pointing out the oppression of women in patriarchal society. Radcliffe opposed feudal and established religious systems and supported Enlightenment values such as

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

²⁷ Radcliffe's never appearing on any social occasion mystified the public. According to *Edinburgh Review* in May 1823, 'She never appeared in public, nor mingled in private society, but kept herself apart, like the sweet bird that sings its solitary notes, shrouded and unseen', quoted in Ruth Facer, 'Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823)', *Library and Early Women's Writings: Women Writers*, Chawton House Library <<http://www.chawton.org/library/biographies/radcliffe.html>>. Moreover, most of Radcliffe's papers were destroyed immediately after her death (probably by her husband). The scarcity of primary materials thus makes the writing of Radcliffe's life and political opinions even more difficult. As Deborah D. Rogers points out, Radcliffe's biographers therefore tend to rely on 'Talfourd's 1826 Memoir of Radcliffe prefixed to Gaston This account, which was written from information supplied by Radcliffe's husband, is necessarily biased', in Deborah D. Rogers, *Ann Radcliffe: A Bio-bibliography* (London, 1996), Preface.

natural religion, deism, progress, and companionate marriage. According to the research of Rictor Norton, Radcliffe's politics were formed during her education, influenced greatly by her maternal uncle, Thomas Bentley, a prominent dissenter and successful businessman who was the business partner of the potter Josiah Wedgwood, and friend of Dr. Joseph Priestley and Dr. John Aikin. In her travel writing *A Journey*, she shared her husband's radically-inclined politics at least until 1795.²⁸ William Radcliffe was a journalist and, from 1790 to 1793, was a co-editor of the *Gazetteer* and *New Daily Advertiser*, very radical newspapers in London. Then he became the owner of *the English Chronicle*. According to Ann Radcliffe in the preface of *A Journey*, her 'nearest relative and friend' William was responsible for the political sentiments in her travel writing. She admitted that 'the account of it [*A Journey*] has been written so much from their mutual observation'.²⁹ Thus, it was certain that Ann Radcliffe shared her husband's republican enthusiasm for the cause of the French Revolution.

In The Hague, writing her comments on the politics and governments of the United Provinces, Radcliffe expressed her opinions on the process and methods of political reform and progress. As a supporter of moderate republicanism, she disagreed with the idea of active revolution as the best means for political progress.

²⁸ For Ann Radcliffe's dissenting background and her political attitude, see Rictor Norton, *Mistress of Udolpho: The Life of Ann Radcliffe* (London and New York, 1999).

²⁹ Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the West Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine* (London, 1795), p. vi, v.

Like Wollstonecraft after 1794, Radcliffe stressed gradualism and gentle progress as well as the moral and intellectual conditions of all people, which was a prerequisite for political improvements and for the better running of new political systems. In the process of approaching political happiness, ‘the means should be as honest as the end’, and the degree of progress should take account of the capability of people, mainly the condition of ‘the moral and intellectual character of a people’.³⁰ France was an example of how, without the proper process and correct methods, sudden political changes would only cause greater obstructions to real progress. As she put it, the Enlightenment philosopher ‘begins his experiment, for the amelioration of society, as prematurely as the sculptor would polish his statue before he had delineated the features’.³¹ The intellectual and moral condition of the people, Radcliffe believed, was a precondition for political improvements, and, most important of all, was an essential condition to secure the better running of political systems.³² Although a follower of Enlightenment values and believing that these values were beneficial to the progress of human societies, she nevertheless condemned any unjust political means which only damaged political happiness. Moreover, she disagreed with hurried reform or a revolution which promoted abstract philosophy in an immature society.

The Radcliffes met some French émigrés during their journey in Germany and

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 34.

were impressed by their elegant character. Their experiences of communication with various *ci-devant* officers made Radcliffe admit that ‘had the old system in France, oppressive as it was, and injurious as Englishmen were once justly taught to believe it, been universally administered by men of their mildness, integrity and benevolence, it could not have been entirely overthrown by all the theories, or all the eloquence in the world.’³³ We may therefore conclude that this Revolution had changed some fixed views of many radically-inclined writers. Not only did they question their philosophy of rational men and Rousseauian natural rights, but their preconceived ideas of the corrupt, unjust and tyrannical Louis XVI and the French aristocracy were changed due to their personal experiences of contacting them. When seeing Louis XVI driving past, surrounded by National Guards in Paris, Wollstonecraft acknowledged that the king held himself with greater dignity than she had expected. Radcliffe praised the mild, elegant, honest and benevolent manners of the *ci-devants*, qualities important for the administration of a country. Radcliffe considered that, though there had been many serious flaws in the *ancien régime*, it was not necessary to deny every thing related to the monarchy. These positive elements of the *ancien régime* should have been preserved. At this point, her political idea was not far from Burke’s reformist vision. Burke thought that the *ancien régime* was reformable, and indeed it was

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

reforming by correcting some abuses, thus a radical revolution was not necessary.

Radcliffe agreed with the principles of the Revolution, none the less a revolution did not need to change the whole constitution; changing a constitution did not mean correcting abuses.

Radcliffe also witnessed the dissemination of Revolutionary ideals. The reason was not political, but educational. In her communications with the French during her trip, in contrast to the observation of the 'English Lady' that only the few supported the Revolution, Radcliffe thought that even those who did not believe in the Revolutionary principles before, now, with education, their attachment to these principles 'seemed to be increased'.³⁴ She observed that the French army won popular sympathy and their victories aroused pride. Thus, she wrote, 'Such a change of manners and of the course of education had taken place, that the rising generation were all *enragées* in favour of the Revolution.'³⁵ Radcliffe noticed that the young generation of former aristocrats were much more aware of the democratic ideas in their daily lives.³⁶ She also emphasized that the children of the poorer classes were equally changed by education, and 'those of both sexes were [proficient] in all the Revolutionary songs and catechisms'.³⁷ The French Revolution, to Radcliffe, had begun gradually to influence the opinions of all French people. That is to say,

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 319-20.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

although the rights of men and liberty seemed to be swallowed up by the Revolutionary violence and the Terror, and the old first and second estates still held certain economic strength, the French Revolution had at least affected the French people's private lives. The French now had their political languages and had some acquaintance with the Revolutionary principles. With such belief, their future might change for the better.

As Angela Keane has pointed out, Radcliffe's vision for the progress and political happiness of the Revolution became uncertain over time.³⁸ Once having confidently appealed for liberty in her novels, after her experiences of the Revolution, she came to doubt the optimistic attitudes of Enlightenment philosophers towards historical progress. Politically, the Radcliffes shared a moderate enthusiasm for Revolutionary principles even after the Terror. They did not witness the conditions of Revolutionary France directly, but they experienced the consequences of the Revolutionary war in Germany and talked with several French émigrés in the course of their journey. Radcliffe repeatedly pointed out her disapproval of tyrannical and feudal monarchy as well as of the superstition and oppression of the established Church, and emphasized her sympathy with the ideas of liberty and equality. She thought revolution, however, was not a good way to carry out the republican ideals.

³⁸ Angela Keane, *Women Writers and the English Nation in the 1790s: Romantic Belongings* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 45-7.

Witnessing the consequences of war, she criticized the aggressive and oppressive Jacobins and denounced their efforts to overthrow existing institutions and structures. She also disagreed when the revolutionaries ruthlessly evicted nuns from their convents. Katherine Turner and Keane both maintain that although Radcliffe explicitly denounced the repressive nature of the established religion, she questioned the revolutionaries' efforts to destroy Catholic churches and convents.³⁹ She saw with her own eyes the sad situation of those nuns now in exile in many places in Flanders.⁴⁰ She could not but sympathize with the convent community and deprecate the way the revolutionaries had overthrown established religious institutions.

After the Radcliffes came back to England, they then travelled through the English Lake District in the same year of 1794. In Kendal, in response to a monument celebrating the revolution of 1688, she wrote: 'At a time, when the memory of that revolution is reviled, and the praises of liberty itself endeavoured to be suppressed by the artifice of imputing to it the crimes of anarchy, it was impossible to omit any act of veneration to the blessings of this event.'⁴¹ Although Radcliffe condemned the violence of the Terror and the tyranny of Robespierre, and felt disappointed about the events of the Revolution which had wrought too many crimes, she, like most of her radical friends, and contrary to Burke and many of his followers, did not blame

³⁹ Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe 1750-1800: Authorship, Gender, and National Identity* (Aldershot, 2001), pp. 16-17; Keane, *Women Writers*, pp. 32-4.

⁴⁰ Radcliffe, *A Journey*, pp. 358-9.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

democracy for these evils and crimes. Like Williams, who ended her first six volumes of *Letters* in a positive tone, Radcliffe had not questioned the Revolutionary beliefs. The French Revolution, according to Radcliffe, though it had almost failed in the hands of the Jacobins, was based on the principles of liberty and equality, and should be treasured by and remembered by everyone. It was apparent that though most British radicals admitted that violence could be a necessary evil to destroy a stubborn government that had resisted reform, they did not propose a revolution or reform that gave birth in violence and arms. They realized that violence became not only a course, but also a consequence, thus they denounced such kind of fanatic Revolution. They still thought that the European governments were outdated and corrupt and believed the Revolutionary claims of the rights of men and liberty, yet many disagreed with this Revolution. There might be another way to accomplish their republican dream; hope was still out there, if not too faint.

After *A Journey*, Radcliffe only published one more novel, *The Italian* (1797) and then she completely disappeared from public view. In her last published novel, as Angela Keane puts it, at the end of the story 'the ambivalent image of the energy of popular action associated with the eruptive potential of the volcano, threatening to subsume the liberal properties, their picturesque estate and their implicit principle of

imperceptible agency.’⁴² This was the only novel of Radcliffe’s which contained a sympathetic portrayal of Catholicism. After her journey during the French Revolution, stressed by Keane, Radcliffe can be said to have offered ‘an uncertain vision of historical progress’, through the overthrow of established institutions, and liberty, without proper restrictions and popular enlightened minds, would bring fearful results to human society.⁴³

3. Perspective from a Liberal Whig

In 1798, another anonymous woman published her travel letters. According to her editor, C. L. Moody, a reviewer of the *Monthly Review*, the author was an ‘English Lady’, ‘who was lately making a tour through France, in company with her husband, a military gentleman’ in order to trace the effects of ‘one of the greatest political changes which the world has ever experienced’.⁴⁴ These letters were addressed to a lady of fashion attached to one of the branches of the royal family, and had been put into Moody’s hand for the press.⁴⁵ As we can observe in her writing, the author was a well-educated open-minded woman, acquainted with Enlightenment and democratic thinking. She wrote with hardly any personal national prejudice, affirmed by the *Analytical Review*, being ‘neither wedded to aristocracy and superstition, nor a blind

⁴² Keane, *Women Writers*, p. 46.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7.

⁴⁴ Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France. In a Series of Letters to a Lady of Fashion. Written in the Years 1796 and 1797, during a Tour through France* (London, 1798), p. vi, 3. Katherine Turner indicates that ‘none of the reviews seems to have doubted its authenticity’. Turner, *British Travel Writers*, p. 213.

⁴⁵ Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France*, p. vi.

admirer of equality and republicanism'.⁴⁶

She expected to see the consequences of this Revolution. Despite a widespread conservative turn in political sentiment in Britain after 1793, the author had not denied the possibility of establishing a liberal government in France with its new constitution. For her, this 'great and powerful people', in the heart of enlightened Europe, had shown their attachment to monarchy and were proud of the splendour of their civil and religious institutions. All of a sudden they had changed their veneration for all traditional values and established orders into an enthusiasm for something completely new. After the subversion of their government and religion, they 'resolve[d] themselves into almost a state of nature', and intended to 'form for themselves a system of government wholly unlike the preceding'.⁴⁷ Like most of her contemporaries, she did not see any continuation between the old and the new regime; the latter was a completely new system.⁴⁸ Moreover, in the author's opinion, which was similar to the Burkean view, the French Revolution did not resemble the British revolution of 1688. The Glorious Revolution achieved no violent and convulsive change; it did not affect the great principles of the constitution: 'it neither annihilated

⁴⁶ *The Analytical Review*, 27(1798), p. 21, quoted in Turner, *British Travel Writers*, p. 212.

⁴⁷ Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France*, p. 2.

⁴⁸ Most of the contemporaries detached the Revolution from the *ancien régime*. Historian Alexis de Tocqueville disagreed with this way of understanding the *ancien régime* and the Revolution in his famous work, *The Ancien Régime and the Revolution* (1856). P. M. Jones agrees with de Tocqueville and explains that, to de Tocqueville, 'the phenomenon unleashed in 1789 should be understood less as a repudiation of the *ancien régime* than as a confirmation of some of its most deep-seated tendencies', P. M. Jones, *Reform and Revolution in France: The Politics of Transition, 1774-1791* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 238. Simon Schama also stresses this argument in his *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 2004).

the monarchy, the aristocracy, nor the church; it invaded the property of no order of men, nor did it abolish any of civil usages and institutions'.⁴⁹ But the French Revolution had shaken and subverted everything to the very foundations, and the French revolutionaries, according to this 'Lady', were now labouring to erect a new structure according to their political philosophy and resembling no other previous examples in the world.

On her way to Paris, she was surprised that children's education was neglected by the civil authorities. Thus, some priests were employed to instruct youths privately in their apartments and their lectures were better attended than the *écoles centrales*, established by the government in 1796, where the lectures were of bad quality. The author, however, thought priests were not the best men to superintend the education of a people: 'To priestly education I attribute much of the superstition and mental weakness that has afflicted Europe', she maintained.⁵⁰ These priests, via their teaching, 'inflamm[e] [the youths'] prejudices; ... instead of leading them with expanded and generous sentiments into the broad paths of science and virtue'.⁵¹ Thus, the author worried about the future of the French Republic. If the republicans could not find other instructors for their children, after the Catholic Church had been discarded during the Revolution, Catholicism would be the prevailing faith again, and its

⁴⁹ Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France*, p. 3.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

influence of 'superstition' and 'mental weakness' would be the same as under the *ancien régime*.⁵²

The 'Lady' appears to have been an Anglican. Her views on Catholicism revealed a typical British protestant mentality. According to Gerald Newman, the British had defined themselves as beacons of sincerity, freedom and honesty against Catholic Europe, whose character was superstitious, licentious, immoral and un-free.⁵³ The author, like most of her Protestant compatriots, believed that it was mainly because of Catholicism that the French character had been corrupted. The French Republic needed to educate people, but they should find better persons to substitute for the Catholic priests, so that they would not make the same mistakes over again. Nevertheless, she still disagreed with the overthrow of the Catholic Church in France and the cult of reason. For her, it was a sad result of Enlightenment philosophy, because the 'mad' philosophers and revolutionaries preached atheism.⁵⁴ As she wrote, it was better to believe too much than to believe nothing, and any religion was preferable to atheism. The actions of the revolutionaries not only took away the French people's worldly property and comforts, 'but even of their hopes and prospects beyond this world'.⁵⁵ It seems that, to the author, the only and the best solution was to substitute Anglicanism for Catholicism. Otherwise, Catholicism, a religion with

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁵³ Gerald Newman, *The Rise of Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830* (London, 1987).

⁵⁴ Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France*, p. 53.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

many elements of superstition, was still better than atheism.

During her trip in France, she believed that the situation of the country was far from what she had heard and been taught in Britain. She had been told that France was next to 'a desert, barren, uncultivated, and dreadfully depopulated, both as to men and the armies', but her British fellows had judged the French erroneously and understood the country imperfectly.⁵⁶ Entering Paris with her husband, on 18 November 1796, as Katherine Turner indicates, this Lady wrote of her feelings in a satiric tone in order to counteract the misleading words about the horrors of contemporary France that were spreading across Britain.⁵⁷ She wrote:

My sensations on entering this capital of the French Republic I can but feebly describe. I trembled, - I wept; - and though I longed to see that this famous city contained, yet I was afraid that my poor nerves would be unequal to the shock which some of its scenes must unavoidably occasion. ... I shall dream of assassination and murder, and blood will be uppermost in my thoughts.⁵⁸

She represented the typical fearful gothic version of Revolutionary France, but she continued,

But I perceive that I am rather sketching the present state of my own mind than a picture of Paris ... In some things I must confess that I was agreeably disappointed. Those terrific illusions which my fancy had conjured up, and which possessed my imagination, were but partly realized. If, indeed, I *sought* for traces of the revolution, I found them; but these were not marked on the countenances and in the demeanour of the inhabitants.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

⁵⁷ Turner, *British Travel Writers*, pp. 213-4.

⁵⁸ Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France*, p. 134.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 135-6.

Things in Paris were not as horrible as British conservative writers and the majority of the British people had supposed in the late 1790s, then: 'Activity pervades the streets, and pleasure and dissipation still preserve their empire', the author stressed.⁶⁰

Although Paris now looked better and more energetic than she had anticipated, she still saw the aftermath of the Terror, and she lamented the miseries the French had undergone. She questioned, 'Whatever charms there may be in the idea of Liberty, if her approach is to be attached with such sacrifices, who but must abate of their admiration?' The idea of correcting the abuse of a political system and constructing a new one on the basis of liberty and equality were good and attractive, but if such a revolution was born in bloodshed, she would not agree with it totally. What she supported, therefore, was a peaceful reform made by the governing classes rather than a political action by the people with their arms. In addition, she did not criticize those French people who thought the Revolution brought nothing but misery because of their personal experience of having lost family and friends.⁶¹ These people were violently critical of the present new government, considering it as 'a species of tyranny far more intolerable than absolute monarchy'.⁶² All these were the results of the wrong and cruel methods of the Revolution. She wrote:

I do not wonder that the *French revolution* should be reprobated by many in this part of the world. It was hailed as a blessing at first; but in

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 314.

its progress it has evinced itself the bane of thousands. The over-ruling hand of Providence may, and probably will, in future time convert it to the good of mankind; but to many now it is a source of distress, and more pregnant with *fear* than *hope*.⁶³

At the beginning of the French Revolution, many people, both in France and Britain, were charmed by its beautiful claim of liberty and equality, with all hopes and all good possibilities for future perfectibility. Nevertheless, the Revolution came alone with bloodshed and popular violence, which made those who sympathized with its ideals retreated. For many of them, the Revolution became to be almost synonymous with violence and terror.

In her view, present French manners were still deeply influenced by the *ancien régime*. She agreed with the view of a *ci-devant* she met on the road that the French were too fickle and frivolous to form a system of ‘simplicity and virtue’, and to become ‘steady republicans’.⁶⁴ The revolutionaries were fighting and labouring to establish a system that was still ill adapted to their present character.⁶⁵ The influence of the *ancien régime* was so strong that it would be an arduous task for the republicans to change the sentiment and manners of their people. She believed that national character was in a great measure the result of political and religious institutions and so the French character was not yet ‘*republicanised*’.⁶⁶ ‘Ignorance’, ‘superstition’ and ‘profligacy’, which were the products of the *ancien régime* and of

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 409.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 315.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

Catholicism, still prevailed in France.⁶⁷ She also found that egoism had become the principle of the day. As Wollstonecraft and the Russell sisters had noted in their observations of Revolutionary France, how their personal interests were affected was the main means by which the French summed up the impact of the Revolution.⁶⁸ Should the French Republic be able to maintain its ground, which would be a time-consuming task, the 'Lady' expected that the people of this country would undergo a great change in sentiment and manners. Hence, her opinions about the Revolution were very similar to that of Wollstonecraft that the Revolution was too fast for the French. The French had not yet adapted themselves to the new republican government, nor had the revolutionaries figured out a pragmatic way of gaining practical benefits from their abstract theories.

B. Patriotism and National Consciousness

No matter what political position these women travellers took in this post-Terror period, with the exception of Helen Maria Williams, they revealed their national attachment to Britain. In *A Residence*, the author, as the 'English Lady', proposed to embody the image of patriotic womanhood. Although this 'English Lady' never mentioned the names of Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams in her travelogue, her highly reactive tone intended to criticize everything about the

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

Revolution and, as Turner points out, to provide ‘an alternative to the image of British womanhood’ that was proper to the eyes of the conservatives.⁶⁹ For the conservatives, it was not proper for women to write about politics; instead, they should devote themselves to their traditional roles as wives and mothers. Yet, what the conservatives actually criticized were those who supported the politics of republicanism and the Revolution against the establishment. Women who spoke for the established religion and social order and reaffirmed their loyalty to the political establishment were exempted from the conservatives’ charges. This ‘English Lady’ therefore exemplified this kind of female patriotism not only by emphasizing the company of her husband during her travels so that her position was actually within a family, but also by asserting her patriotism in opposition to those who were against church and king.

At the end of *A Residence*, not surprisingly, this ‘English Lady’ concluded the book by writing that ‘I am wearied and disgusted with the contemplation of this despotism’. Finally, she literally returned to Britain, ‘deeply and gratefully impressed with sense of the blessings we enjoy in a free and happy constitution.’⁷⁰ The author responded to loyalist propaganda and the conservative campaign about the virtues of the British constitution and the dangerous consequences of radical reform or revolution. She contrasted the two different political systems and political realities,

⁶⁹ Turner, *British Travel Writers*, p. 211.

⁷⁰ English Lady, *A Residence*, ii, p. 464.

and now returned home and was even more satisfied with her life in Britain. The wisdom of the British constitution, like the words of conservative propaganda, effectively combined liberty with stability, and such happiness combined harmoniously with social and economic reality.

The definition of patriotism and the patriot was changing at the end of the eighteenth century as we have noted. Today a patriot means someone who loves his or her country and is very loyal, if not jingoistic, towards it, but, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, someone who was a patriot supported and defended his or her country's freedom and rights, and was usually opposed to the existing social and political order.⁷¹ In the eighteenth century, according to *A Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century History*, 'patriotic sentiments were often radical, serving as veiled critiques of corruption at court and as expressions of community feeling against despotism and dynasticism.'⁷² It originated in the seventeenth century when those who defended the traditional liberties of Englishmen against Stuart monarchs were called 'patriots'. By the mid-eighteenth century, these 'patriotic' radicals, who claimed to oppose the corrupted government and tyrannical George III in order to restore the liberty of the 'ancient constitution' that had developed since Anglo-Saxon times, proclaimed that their intention was to defend British traditional virtue against

⁷¹ For the definition of 'patriot', see *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (2 vols., 5th edn., Oxford, 2002), ii, p. 2212.

⁷² *A Dictionary of Eighteenth-Century History*, ed. Jeremy Black and Roy Porter (London, 2001), p. 550.

the corrupt existing order.⁷³ John Dinwiddy points out that, by the later eighteenth century, many of the patriots became positive reformers in nearly every large urban area, advocating, for example, an extension of the franchise and the redistribution of parliamentary seats.⁷⁴ During the 1790s pamphlet controversy between Burke and the radicals, some of the radical patriots, as maintained in the Chapter 3, while emphasizing the rights of men and liberty as before, no longer stressed their connection with the ancient constitution. The political ideology of the patriots was changing at the end of the eighteenth century.

As Dinwiddy indicates, ‘The French Revolution in its early stages was thought to be proclaiming ideals of liberty and fraternity which transcended national boundaries; and English radicals responded with such enthusiasm to this trend that their “Patriotism” became paradoxically tinged with cosmopolitanism.’⁷⁵ The special meaning of ‘patriot’ as a friend of liberty and the direct meaning of the word as someone who loves his or her country became ever more a matter of dispute during the Revolution. The character of patriot radicalism and cosmopolitanism can be seen clearly in Dr. Priestley, and his friends William Russell, Martha Russell and Mary Russell, as described in Chapter 6, whose love for liberty and reform (‘patriotism’)

⁷³ For the concept of the patriot and patriotism, see also Hugh Cunningham, ‘The Language of Patriotism’, in *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity: Vol. I. History and Politics*, ed. Raphael Samuel (London, 1989), pp. 58-62.

⁷⁴ John Dinwiddy, ‘England’, in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, ed. Otto Dann and John Dinwiddy (London, 1988), p. 55.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

merged with their efforts to identify themselves as citizens of the world ('cosmopolitanism').⁷⁶ The forces of patriotic radicalism however were split and the term 'patriotic' turned from describing the radicals' character to emphasising the conservatives' loyalty to the establishment in the late eighteenth century, mainly due to foreign wars. The widespread conservative campaigns successively rallied loyalist opinions throughout Britain. As Hugh Cunningham maintains, although 'patriot' continued to be the label of radical dissenters until the early nineteenth century, they were criticized as *disloyal patriots* by the British government and conservative propaganda.⁷⁷ According to loyalist propaganda, while the constitutional tradition had effectively protected Britons' liberty in stability for centuries, radicalism, taking the French Revolution as the best example, would only destroy their beloved tradition. The radicals' sympathy with the Revolutionary cause was stressed as supporting their foreign enemy with the intention to dissolve society and destroy the British constitutional tradition.⁷⁸ Consequently, the loyalists now became the *true patriots*, whereas the patriot radicals were charged with *disloyalty*.

The radicals were finding it difficult to argue that they were also patriots because they had been too closely associated with American and French principles. In

⁷⁶ Note that Dr. Priestley and the Russells, though disappointed about the present political situation in Britain, certainly had shown their natural attachment to their mother land, because they endeavoured to carry out reforms. When they were in exile in America, their attachment to Britain continued; they still cared about the politics of their home country.

⁷⁷ Cunningham, 'The Language of Patriotism', pp. 63-4.

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 62-70; and Dinwiddy, 'England', pp. 60-4.

the 1790s, therefore, the ownership of 'patriotism' moved from the hands of the radicals to the hands of loyalist conservatives. Decades previously, patriotism could be claimed by those who were against the existing order; now, by the mid-1790s, due to changes in the political situation, it belonged to those who defended the existing order and were loyal to Britain. After the mid-1790s most British women travellers, even some of the radically-inclined women, ended their travel journal with a declaration of their love and blessings for Britain. At the end of Charlotte West's travel journal, she, a conservative like the anonymous author of *A Residence*, proclaimed her patriotic feelings towards her 'dear England'. She returned to Britain in 1797 'with a much greater love of my country than before I left it, and a much higher esteem for its laws and the administration of them'.⁷⁹ She again showed her faith in Britain, her king and her constitution and assured her readers that only under this form of government could people live in liberty and, most important of all, in security: 'In England no man ever need be afraid of being taken out of his bed at midnight, and sent no one knows where, or thrown into a dungeon, or guillotined'.⁸⁰ West considered those British radicals who had supported Revolutionary principles and reform ideas as 'unpatriotic'. Their thinking was a national betrayal. Hence, West expressed her sincere wish that all British people could share the same sentiment with

⁷⁹ West, *A Ten Years' Residence*, p. 99.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

her to protect their constitution and king so that Britain could stand proudly as the home of liberty forever.

The final letter of *A Sketch of Modern France* presented the author's general views on politics, religion, morality, arts and sciences, agriculture, commerce, and finances. In politics, she wished the new government could run better and fulfil Revolutionary ideals more smoothly. Indeed, she worried about the current state of the French: 'The partiality of the people to monarchy is not yet done away, and the priests do all they can to keep this principle alive'.⁸¹ If the present government produced a demagogue, the 'Lady' maintained, there would be no saying how far the power of monarchy and Catholics might operate in order to change their government.⁸² Along with her hope for the new French government, she revealed her fear of war, which had endangered her country for years. Thus, she ended her letter on a patriotic note that no matter which forms and principles the French would adopt, this was how the Revolution would finally terminate, 'I confess that I have my fears; but I hope that the rulers of Europe will be wise, and that Divine Providence will perpetuate the British Constitution, and the prosperity of the British Empire.'⁸³

The age of the French Revolution witnessed not only popular patriotism, but also the rise of British national consciousness and the notion of Britishness. The term

⁸¹ Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France*, p. 504.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 504.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 517-18.

‘nationalism’ appeared after the mid-nineteenth century; but it is acknowledged that the sense of British national awareness developed especially during the wars against Revolutionary France.⁸⁴ Under the threat of Revolutionary France, by the end of March 1792 - although the Convention explained that what Revolutionary France opposed was despotic government in Europe, and suggested that those who adhered to the principles of the French Revolution were fellow citizens and were not enemies of Revolutionary France -⁸⁵ the overwhelming majority of British people armed themselves and defended their king and constitution against their most dangerous enemy in history: the French. As Linda Colley has emphasized, ‘we usually decide who we are by reference to who and what we are not.’⁸⁶ In *A Residence*, therefore, the author revealed this kind of attitude by differentiating between the situations in Britain and in France and maintaining the comfortable life the British had lived.⁸⁷ On judging these two countries, she admitted that she had her national prejudice: ‘[I] have not scrupled to give a preference to my own country where I believe it was due. I

⁸⁴ See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2nd edn., London, 2005); Linda Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness: An Argument’, *Journal of British Studies*, 31 (1992), 309-29; Clive Emsley, ‘Revolution, War and the Nation State: the British and French Experiences 1789-1801’, in *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, ed. Mark Philp (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 99-117; John Dinwiddy, ‘England’, in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, ed. Otto Dann and John Dinwiddy (London, 1988), pp. 53-70; and H. T. Dickinson, ‘Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism, 1789-1815’, in *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815*, ed. H. T. Dickinson (London, 1989), pp. 103-25.

⁸⁵ Michael Rapport, *Nationality and Citizenship in Revolutionary France: the Treatment of Foreigners 1789-1799* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 136-7, 139, 145-6, 170. As Rapport stresses, despite the outbreak of war between Britain and France from February 1793, ‘initially no measures were taken against British or Irish subjects’, *ibid.*, p. 170. Yet, the radicalization of the revolution politics and the war changed the foreign policy of the Convention by the late 1793, and the hostility towards the foreigners, including foreign radicals, in France largely increased. See *ibid.*, pp. 186-258.

⁸⁶ Linda Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness’, 311.

⁸⁷ English Lady, *A Residence*, i, p. 34.

make no pretensions to that sort of cosmopol[ist][ism] which is without partialities'.⁸⁸ For her, people with national prejudice were natural. People had such a right to prefer their own political society; in contrast, those cosmopolitans, hinting at those British radicals, were people 'of very cold hearts' because they were incapable of loving their country.⁸⁹

Travelling abroad at this crucial time, even for a radical dissenter like Radcliffe who had supported Revolutionary ideals after the Terror, caused her to express her national sentiments via her contacts with foreigners: 'Englishmen, who feel, as they always must, the love of their own country much increased by the view of others, should be induced, at every step, to wish, that there may be as little political intercourse as possible, either of friendship or enmity, between the blessings of their Island and the wretchedness of the Continent'.⁹⁰ In Mentz, Germany, a town destroyed by French besiegers in 1793, Radcliffe acknowledged the importance of national defence and argued that her nation should defend herself by any means. Her husband, William, could not help but rejoice at the existence of a powerful 'natural security' – the English Channel – that helped his nation. Towards the end of her journey, she revealed her eagerness to come home. The Radcliffes landed in England with extreme delight, and the author concluded, with their 'love of our country,

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, ii, p. 486.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 485-6.

⁹⁰ Radcliffe, *A Journey*, p. 108.

greatly enhanced by all that had been seen of other'.⁹¹ Despite the fact that Radcliffe had not agreed with the loyalist propaganda which considered the French as enemies of liberty and of British constitutional tradition, it was very natural for her to reinforce her national attachment during the war. As Linda Colley puts it,

Britons defined themselves in terms of their common Protestantism as contrasted with the Catholicism of Continental Europe. They defined themselves against France throughout a succession of major wars with that power. ... They defined themselves, in short, not just through an internal and domestic dialogue but in conscious opposition to the Other beyond their shores.⁹²

Through frequent wars with France in the long eighteenth century, with an ever increasing awareness of crisis, of the possibility of being invaded by the revolutionaries and Napoleon Bonaparte at the end of eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, all Britons could focus on what they had in common against their enemy. National sentiment, without doubt, was significantly aroused in this period.

C. Dorothy Wordsworth and the Lake Poets' Retreat into a Rural Community

Most writers who were progressive idealists and believers in Enlightenment philosophy thought that the French Revolution elevated individual reason, will and freedom much higher than moral responsibilities. Thus, without restraining human beings' dark side and stressing their moral duties, the Revolution inevitably tended

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

⁹² Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness', p. 316.

towards a selfish society. The Terror was the best example. Wordsworth had once shared the joy of the fall of the Bastille with his generation,⁹³ yet the terror and war brought him bitter ‘despair’ of humanity⁹⁴ and distrust of Godwin’s abstract philosophy of reason and justice as expounded in *Political Justice*.⁹⁵ Such rational philosophy, as Nicholas Roe indicates, resembles Robespierre’s claim of ‘reason’, ‘virtue’ and ‘justice’.⁹⁶ Wordsworth learned the weakness and fallibility of human being and understood the virtue of being ‘chasten[ed]’ and ‘subdue[d]’.⁹⁷ By 1798, Wordsworth moved away from his Revolutionary hope and rational philosophy decisively. His sister Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal often revealed their shared views of human society and Nature.

Dorothy Wordsworth (1771-1855) was known as a diarist and life-long close companion of William Wordsworth (1770-1850). She had never had any intention of becoming an author; she enjoyed devoting her life to domestic duties.⁹⁸ Moreover, thanks to Dorothy, who accompanied Wordsworth through this disturbance of mind, maintained him ‘from a saving intercourse / with [his] true self’ and Nature, and gave

⁹³ William Wordsworth, *The Prelude: The Four Texts (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850)*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (London, 1995), Book vi (1805), p. 226, line 352-5. See also William Wordsworth to Dorothy Wordsworth, Keswill, 6 September 1790, in William Wordsworth and Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Early Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth (1787-1805)*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford, 1935), p. 35.

⁹⁴ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, book x (1805), p. 452, line 897-900.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, book x (1805), p. 446, line 806-8.

⁹⁶ Nicholas Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge: the Radical Years* (Oxford, 1988), p. 209.

⁹⁷ William Wordsworth, *Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey* (1798), in William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads, with a few other poems*, ed. Michael Schmidt (London, 1999), p. 112, line 94.

⁹⁸ See Robert Gittings and Jo Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 27-9.

him that 'strength and knowledge full of peace',⁹⁹ Wordsworth revived his 'former heart' as a poet and the love of Nature from his earlier life.¹⁰⁰ About 1797, they moved to Alfoxden House in Somerset and became friends with Coleridge. From here Dorothy started to keep her journal, including during her various travels in Europe and Britain. Dorothy did not use analysis in her daily writings; neither did she talk about her own views of political and religious theories like her brother or their literary friends. Yet her writings and taste for landscapes were important sources of stimulation for Wordsworth, and for Coleridge,¹⁰¹ who lived with them in Dove Cottage. No one had ever inspired the poets as Dorothy had done; her observations of nature provided rich materials for their poetry.

Dorothy travelled with her brother and Coleridge to Germany (Hamburg and Goslar) in the early winter of 1798. This was her first trip abroad. By the time she travelled, many European travel journals written during the French Revolution had been published and many of these travelogues had concentrated on the subject of politics. Wordsworth had read travel literature by Patrick Brydone, William Coxe, John Moore, Joshua Lucock Wilkinson, Helen Maria Williams and Mary

⁹⁹ Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, book x (1805), p. 454, line 914-5, 924-5. In *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth again appreciated the companionship of Dorothy, 'his dear, dear Friend'. Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*, p. 112, line 117.

¹⁰⁰ Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*, p. 112, line 118-20; Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, book x (1805), p. 454, line 918-20.

¹⁰¹ Mary Moorman points out that Dorothy's journal and 'Williams' fragmentary verse often record the same incident or the same view'. Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth, a Biography: the Early Years, 1770-1803* (Oxford, 1969), p. 335. See also *ibid.*, pp. 343-4; and Gittings and Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, pp. 79-80.

Wollstonecraft.¹⁰² He had also read the most influential works on the Revolution controversy, such as those of Burke, Paine, Godwin, Mackintosh and Wollstonecraft,¹⁰³ which were concerned the progress of civilization, the best political system and human happiness. Dorothy and her brother often wrote together and shared their opinions on the books they had read; thus she had probably read the books mentioned above as well. At the least, she knew about them. But Dorothy's travel journal, like her later journals, did not talk about the Revolution or any theory; instead, she wrote details of what she saw and left a favourable assessment of humankind and sympathy with the things she described.¹⁰⁴

Because Dorothy did not write any comments on the Revolution, I do not wish to devote much space to her journal. Yet it is worth mentioning Virginia Woolf's remarks about Dorothy's German journal. Woolf made a comparison of Mary Wollstonecraft's Scandinavian travel writing with Dorothy's 'Journal of Visit to Hamburgh and of Journey from Hamburgh to Goslar' in 1798.¹⁰⁵ Wollstonecraft was in Altona, Hamburg during her Scandinavian trip in 1795, and Dorothy visited the same places three years later. But their observations were very different. As Woolf

¹⁰² Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading 1770-1799* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 20, 40, 103, 148-9, 149-50, 152-3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-3, 66-7, 92, 152-3. Roe also pointed out that 'A Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff' reveals that Wordsworth had read both Burke and Paine, and Book Nine of *The Prelude* recalls that before his second visit to France he "had read, and eagerly/Sometimes, the master pamphlets of the day" (ix, 96-7)', Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁴ Dorothy Wordsworth, 'Journal of Visit to Hamburgh and of Journey from Hamburgh to Goslar (1798)', in *The Continental Journals* (Bristol, 1995).

¹⁰⁵ Virginia Woolf, *The Second Common Reader*, ed. Andrew McNeillie (London, 2003), pp. 164-5.

indicated,

Whatever Mary saw served to start her mind upon some theory, upon the effect of government, upon the state of the people, upon the mystery of her own soul. The beat of the oars on the waves made her ask, 'Life, what are you? Where goes this breath? This *I* so much alive? In what element will it mix, giving and receiving fresh energy?' And sometimes she forgot to look at the sunset ... Dorothy, on the other hand, noted what was before her accurately, literally, and with prosaic precision. 'The walk very pleasing between Hamburgh and Altona. A large piece of ground planted with trees, and intersected by gravel walks. ... The ground on the opposite side of the Elbe appears marshy.' Dorothy never railed against 'the cloven hoof of despotism'.¹⁰⁶

Dorothy never confused her own soul and the outside landscape. She saw nature as it was. Abstract philosophical musing and reveries did not exist between her and her objects; she just found the exact words for the sunrise and sunset.¹⁰⁷ Just like the journal entry Dorothy recorded on 14 April 1798 in Alfoxden: that on a stormy evening they received Godwin's *Memoir* of Wollstonecraft. The day after, Dorothy walked in the squire's grounds and noticed that 'Nature was very successfully striving to make beautiful what art had deformed - ruins, hermitages, etc. etc.'¹⁰⁸ There was no reference to Mary Wollstonecraft. Woolf argued for Dorothy Wordsworth:

[I]t seems as if her life and all its storms had been swept away in one of

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁰⁷ Gittings and Manton write about Dorothy's writing style: 'The paradox of her unique style is that it is no style ... Nothing distracts. The acute observation by Dorothy is there, but no Dorothy herself. Every object, sight, sound is allowed its own nature', *Dorothy Wordsworth*, p. 78.

¹⁰⁸ Dorothy Wordsworth wrote: 'April 14th. Walked in the wood in the morning. The evening very stormy, so we staid within doors. Mary Wollstonecraft's life, etc. ,came.' And 'April 15th. A fine cloudy morning. Walked about the squire's grounds. Quaint waterfalls about, about which Nature was very successfully striving to make beautiful what art had deformed - ruins, hermitages, etc. etc. In spite of all these things, the dell romantic and beautiful, though everywhere planted with unnaturalised tress. Happily we cannot shape the huge hills, or carve out the valleys according to our fancy.' In Dorothy Wordsworth, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. E. de Sélincourt (2 vols., London, 1941), i, 'The Alfoxden Journal (1798)', p. 15.

those compendious et ceteras, and yet the next sentence reads like an unconscious comment. 'Happily we cannot shape the huge hills, or carve out the valleys according to our fancy.' No, we cannot re-form, we must not rebel; we can only accept and try to understand the message of Nature. And so the notes go on.¹⁰⁹

The outside world was still stormy both politically and socially; but the disillusioned poet and his sister chose a different philosophy of life after 1797. Dorothy's 'Happily we cannot shape the huge hills, or carve out the valleys according to our fancy' reflected Wordsworth's attitudes during this period too. For these writers, there were too many uncertainties in rational minds, in historical progress and political reform, and they felt that man should not re-build the world according to his will. In consequence, as mentioned previously, they began to retreat from republicanism and rational philosophy and to embrace Nature and their everyday life. Men should not lose themselves in this chaotic era, and so these writers emphasized their habitual feelings and lives, and appealed to their moral sense. Whereas some radical dissenters such as the Russell family clung to the idea of an enlightened society in America, William and Dorothy Wordsworth settled down in the English Lake District and began their literary life.¹¹⁰ Though they still travelled, they did not go searching for the most enlightened and best reformed society. Neither did they try to draw a blueprint for a new utopia as the revolutionaries and the radicals did.

¹⁰⁹ Woolf, *The Second Common Reader*, p. 165.

¹¹⁰ As Roe concludes, the failure of the French Revolution made Wordsworth lose his faith in republicanism and rationalism by 1798, and 'it was this failure that made Wordsworth a poet.' Roe, *Wordsworth and Coleridge*, p. 275.

PART THREE
IMAGES OF NAPOLEON
CHAPTER 8
SKETCHES OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE AND
POST-REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE DURING THE PEACE OF
AMIENS: 1802-1803

Part Two has explored British women travellers' political responses to the Revolution controversy from 1789 to 1802, and has discussed the changing character of British patriotism and the rise of nationalism at the end of the eighteenth century. Part Three will focus on women travellers' views on Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821). Their attitudes towards Napoleon at different periods of time revealed the strengthening of British nationalism in the early nineteenth century. This chapter aims to discuss British women travel writers' reflections on Napoleon Bonaparte during the Peace of Amiens and their growing revulsion at Bonaparte's moves towards dictatorship after August 1802. Having been at war with France since 1793 had made Great Britain a war-weary, over-taxed nation. Peace with France became necessary at the turn of the century under almost any circumstances. On 1 October 1801 the peace preliminaries were agreed and signed. Although the Anglo-French negotiations remained ongoing for the next six months, the active war was stopped. The Peace of Amiens was finally

signed on 25 March 1802. As soon as the peace preliminaries were announced, the people of both countries celebrated and flocks of British people prepared to visit Paris. It was the first time since 1793 that people had been able to travel freely across the English Channel, even though the definitive treaty would not be completed until March 1802. According to British women's travel journals, none of them doubted the eventual conclusion of the Treaty; they assumed the definitive peace would follow after the agreement of the peace preliminaries was made.¹ As John D. Grainger shows, considerable numbers of visitors would cross the Channel in each direction during the Amiens negotiations, and 'the general welcome these people had received in the other country had shown well enough where the general population wished the negotiations after the Preliminaries to end'.² British visitors flocked to Paris as they had done prior to the outbreak of the Revolutionary wars. According to a report in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Napoleon was to be declared Consul for life in 1802 and there were 16,000 English people in Paris for the celebrations.³ During Frances Elizabeth King's stay in Paris from September 1802 to April 1803, it was said that there were about 20,000 Britons residing in different parts of France.⁴ No wonder Catherine Wilmot concluded that 'At present Paris is become a little England'.⁵ Compared with

¹ For the details of the Treaty of Amiens, see, for example, John D. Grainger, *The Amiens Truce: Britain and Bonaparte, 1801-1803* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 82.

² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 72 (1802), 769-71.

⁴ Frances Elizabeth King, *A Tour in France, 1802* (London, 1809), p. 86.

⁵ Catherine Wilmot, *An Irish Peer on the Continent (1801-1803): Being a narrative of the tour of*

those who went to France during the early years of the Revolution, Bonaparte's British visitors during the Peace of Amiens showed less enthusiasm for politics. They were predominantly tourists with cultural pursuits in mind and many were looking for entertainment and pleasure. They also wanted to see what a post-revolutionary society looked like. Nevertheless, the greatest attraction for British visitors was Napoleon Bonaparte himself.

Almost all British travellers headed to see Bonaparte's Grand Review, and some of them were invited to dine with him. They sketched Bonaparte in their journals and letters. Yet their accounts of his personality and government were highly dissimilar to one another. As Richard Whately pointed out, according to some, he was a wise and great hero; others wrote of him as an evil monster. Some, even those who hated him, acknowledged his military skill and strong and focused mind, whereas others viewed him as an extravagant king.⁶ Only when describing his appearance did they all admit he was a small man, though he looked well-proportioned on horseback. These British people fabricated their own image of Bonaparte according to their different perceptions and political views. Thus, Richard Whately argued in his pamphlet of 1819, *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Bonaparte*,

What, then, are we to believe? If we are disposed to credit all that is told

Stephen, 2nd Earl Mount Cashell, *through France, Italy Etc.*, ed. Thomas U. Sadlier (London, 1920), p. 77.

⁶ Richard Whately, *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Bonaparte*, 1819, ed. Ralph S. Pomeroy (London 1985), p. 19.

us, we must believe in the existence not only of one, but of two or three Bonapartes; if we admit nothing but what is well-authenticated, we shall be compelled to doubt of the existence of any.⁷

After his first successful campaign in Italy, in March 1796, Napoleon Bonaparte gradually became an object of interest for British travellers who journeyed to western Europe. Thereafter, as general, consul, and the emperor, Bonaparte was variously represented by British writers, politicians and artists according to their hopes and fears at different times.

A. Napoleon Bonaparte in the 1790s

We need to trace British women travellers' political responses to Bonaparte in the late 1790s to understand the evolution of his popularity among the British over time. General Bonaparte's first Italian Campaign of 1796 and 1797 to 'liberate' the Italians from Austrian domination, his destruction of the Papacy, the second Italian Campaign and his takeover of the Consulate, all won favourable accounts not only in the British press, among radical writers and British Romantic poets, but also among some conservative Britons. When Napoleon Bonaparte came to power as First Consul, in 1799, Mary Berry was an admirer. As she wrote to Mrs. Chomeley in January 1800: 'What think you of the *man Buonaparte*? absolute King of France, quietly established in the Tuileries! For my part I admire him, and think, if he can keep his place, he does

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

his country a service.’⁸ She disagreed with the British government’s hostility towards Bonaparte’s government and wanted her country to make peace with France. As she wrote, formerly the British government ‘were fighting and aiding the other side because it was impossible to make peace with an absolutely democratical government’, but now that an ‘absolutely aristocratical government’ was established, she asked, what did it matter whether Louis XVI or Louis [*sic*] Bonaparte was at its head? Berry confessed that, ‘as a citizen of enlightened Europe’, she should be sorry for the French if they had returned to their ‘worn-out tyranny’ under the Bourbons.⁹ She saw Bonaparte as the right man to lead the French people and bring them to an enlightened state.

Mariana Starke (1762-1838) stayed in Italy from 1792 to 1798 as a nurse for her consumptive relative. Her memoir, *Letter from Italy* (1800), sketched her travels in Italy during the French conquest of Nice in late 1792, Bonaparte’s first Italian campaign and his defeat of the Papacy during 1796 and 1797.¹⁰ Unlike most conservative women’s detestation of Bonaparte, she praised him as a chivalric hero. As a Protestant conservative British female, Starke’s admiration for Bonaparte was

⁸ Mary Berry to Mrs. Chomeley, N. Audley St., 2 January 1800, in Mary Berry, *Extracts of the Journals and Correspondence from the Year 1783 to 1852*, ed. Theresa Lewis (3 vols., London, 1865), ii, p. 110.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.

¹⁰ Mariana Starke, *Letters from Italy, between the years 1792 and 1798, containing a view of the revolutions in that country* (2 vols., London, 1800). The following account of Marian Stark’s opinions of Napoleon is indebted to Jeanne Moskal, ‘Napoleon, Nationalism, and the Politics of Religion in Mariana Starke’s *Letters from Italy*’, in *Rebellious Hearts: British Women Writers and the French Revolution*, ed. Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke (Albany, 2001), pp. 161-90.

fundamentally different from that of the British radicals, who praised Bonaparte's action in liberating Italians from the oppressive Austrians. She admired not only his manly military prowess and chivalric protection of women, but his defeat of the Roman Papacy, which, she believed, embodied tyranny and superstition.¹¹ Bonaparte had shown the chivalric virtue that the French had lost with the fall of the *ancien régime*. It seems identifiable with the lost chivalric virtue that Burke had lamented in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. Bonaparte's destruction of the Papacy was described by Starke as 'the most rapid and brilliant conquests ever gained in so short a period, either by ancient or modern Warriors', and 'the instrument of divine Providence' who '[brought] on the accomplishment of the Prophecies' of the fall of the Pope.¹² After the 1707 Act of Union, Protestantism had helped unify the three countries of England, Scotland and Wales. As Linda Colley has pointed out, therefore, Britain, as a whole, distinguished herself from Europe as a country with a king, and not the Roman Pope as the head of the Church. Through the eighteenth century, anti-Catholicism and the proclamation of Protestantism's superiority had been important elements of British self-definition.¹³ Thus, while Starke praised Bonaparte's anti-Catholic and anti-papist actions, she identified herself as a patriotic Protestant woman.

¹¹ See, for example, Starke, *Letters from Italy*, i, pp. 126-7, footnote; pp. 176-8.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 153, 178.

¹³ See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2nd edn., London, 2005), pp. 11-54.

While some anti-Catholic conservative Britons like Starke revealed their admiration for Bonaparte because of his defeat of the Papacy, other conservatives showed their fear of Bonaparte, because he was regarded as a son of the French Revolution, the successor to the most perilous evil force against human civilization. In late 1796, Charlotte West observed that Bonaparte was gaining great popularity. As she wrote, after the rise of Bonaparte, in France, 'by degrees every thing was beginning to shew the presence of a master, and order was again rising from the bed of chaos'.¹⁴ While there was a second wave of enthusiasm for the Revolution heightened by Napoleonic campaigns across Europe, West was trying to warn her readers by pointing out her observation of the 'gloom' and 'mischief' of Bonaparte's character, which were keys to this man's mind.¹⁵ Grace Elliott's captivity during the Terror was shared with Josephine de Beauharnais (1763-1814), afterwards Madame Bonaparte. After being set free, Elliott visited her in Paris one day, just after Josephine's marriage to Napoleon Bonaparte in March 1796. Elliott was very surprised at Josephine's marriage, for she wondered 'How could you marry a man with such a horrid name?'.¹⁶ For a British royalist, Bonaparte represented the demonic nature of the French Revolution and a sign of the revival of its strength.

¹⁴ Charlotte West, *A Ten Years' Residence in France, During the Severest Part of the Revolution, from the Year 1787 to 1797, Containing Various Anecdotes of Some of the Most Remarkable Personages of that Period* (London, 1821), p. 99.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁶ Grace Dalrymple Elliott, *Journal of My Life during the French Revolution* (London, 1859), p. 199.

During the late 1790s Helen Maria Williams believed Bonaparte to be the man capable of leading France to become a more democratic state. Many radicals, such as Thomas Paine and, indeed, William Russell, and former supporters of the French Revolution, such as Coleridge, were ambivalent about Bonaparte. Bonaparte's commanding genius made him the right man for this age, and they were persuaded that Bonaparte might defend the French constitution. But, at the same time, Bonaparte's ambition worried them.¹⁷ Helen Maria Williams' admiration for Bonaparte was expressed in a similar manner. As early as 1794, during her short travels in Switzerland, Bonaparte appeared to Williams as more than a saviour of Revolutionary France: 'he belongs not exclusively to France, or her revolution; like Homer, or Newton, Buonaparte belongs to the world'.¹⁸ She anticipated the greatness

¹⁷ At an early stage of Bonaparte's career, Thomas Paine had faith in Napoleon Bonaparte to defend the French Constitution and the republic. In 1796 Paine announced that 'the war could be successfully ended only if France invaded England' and established a republic. Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine: Social and Political Thought* (Boston; London, 1989), p. 33. Hence, Paine was consulted by Bonaparte about the possibility of invading Britain. Bonaparte flattered Paine that he slept with a copy of *Rights of Man* under his pillow. *Ibid.*, p. 33. But the disagreements between them were growing. According to Claeys, Paine claimed that 'he would have accompanied Bonaparte in order "to give the people of England an opportunity of forming a government for themselves, and thereby bring about peace"'. Bonaparte, however, was far more ambitious. Thus, they turned hostile to each other. *Ibid.*, p. 33. Moreover, during the late 1790s Romantic writers such as Coleridge and Wordsworth condemned the French government's suppression of the Swiss cantons, which again seemed to fulfill Burke's warning that the result of the French Revolution would turn out to be tyranny. The poets had been turned away from their former adoration for republicanism and democracy. Yet during the period 1798 to 1802, Bonaparte had been an important imaginary figure for some Romantic writers' political hopes. Even after Bonaparte's elevation to the First Consulship, Coleridge approved of him as the justified man to lead France, although his method of usurpation was undesirable. Writing in March 1800, Coleridge believed that if peace was made, Bonaparte's despotism would have a chance to lead the French nation to a stable and democratic country. Coleridge's hope depended on whether Bonaparte would act with 'true greatness and make the happiness of the nation', or with 'personal power'. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Essays on His Times in The Morning Post and The Courier*, ed. David V. Erdman (3 vols., London, 1978), i, p. 211, 76-9.

¹⁸ Helen Maria Williams, *A Tour in Switzerland, 1798*, ii, in *Women's Travel Writings in Revolutionary France*, ed. Stephen Bending and Stephen Bygrave (7 vols., London, 2007), ii, p. 64.

of Bonaparte to be like those epic heroes who had greatly influenced human civilization. Williams had been aware of the destruction wrought in the name of heroes in history, but she believed that Bonaparte would be different. As she claimed, he was a champion of liberty who would open ‘a new era ... to the world’.¹⁹ His glory was not because of the wars he waged, but from the liberty he was about to bring. As she wrote, Bonaparte was ‘the benefactor of his race converting the destructive lighting of the conqueror’s sword into the benignant rays of freedom, and presenting to vanquished nations the emblems of liberty and independence entwined with the olive of peace’.²⁰ For her, Bonaparte would bring liberty to the European nations and fulfil the principles of the Revolution. Williams’ justification for Bonaparte’s military campaigns in his early years reminds us of her endeavour to rationalize the upheavals of the Revolution in the early 1790s. In her two series of letters, *Sketches of the State of Manners and Opinions in the French Republic towards the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (1801), she wrote with confidence that the principles of the Revolution would be fulfilled under the leadership of Bonaparte and his outstanding political and military skills. Even after he dissolved the Directory and became First Consul, Williams still believed that he would bring liberty to Europe, in spite of the fact that she felt uncomfortable at Bonaparte’s self-aggrandizement.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

The author of *A Sketch of Modern France* heard the news of Bonaparte's victory over the Austrians in Italy, in February 1797, while she was in Chambéry: 'The news was received with joy by the company, and introduced the subject of their new liberty.'²¹ A *ci-devant* she met there, however, disagreed with the popular sentiment. In his view, at this extraordinary time, the majority of Frenchmen had 'lost their senses', and were eager to be killed 'pour une maîtresse imaginaire, que personne ne connoit, et que tout le monde cherche'.²² *Une maîtresse imaginaire* referred to liberty. 'Lady', that is to say the author, explained this man's thinking by claiming that 'this chimera of liberty and equality' had created too many widows, orphans, and weeping damsels. But, as this man stressed, unfortunately, the majority of the young still exhibited the same blind enthusiasm.²³

As some of the female travel accounts had shown, at the turn of the century, in the early stages of Bonaparte's career, the French people still held hopes for the ideals of the Revolution and their new government, and some British women writers chose to believe in Bonaparte's leadership as well. Between 1796 and 1802 Napoleon Bonaparte had even aroused British radical and Whig hopes either for a democratic government or for a constitutional system. Even some conservatives considered Bonaparte as the perfect leader to bring Europe back to peace and stability. His

²¹ Lady, *A Sketch of Modern France. In a Series of Letters to a Lady of Fashion. Written in the Years 1796 and 1797, during a Tour through France* (London, 1798), p. 443.

²² 'for an imaginary mistress, that nobody knows, and that everyone seeks'. *Ibid.*, p. 444.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

subsequent self-aggrandizement delivered a final blow to the radical and Whig hopes for French republicanism, however. Few confused Bonaparte's authoritarian rule with the cause of the Revolution.

B. Napoleon Bonaparte during the Peace of Amiens

Wordsworth went to France again, with Dorothy, on 29 July 1802 in order to see his French former mistress, Annette Vallon, and their nine-year-old daughter, Caroline.

Wordsworth and Dorothy stayed in Calais for a month with Vallon and Caroline.²⁴

Many of Wordsworth's sonnets, written in August 1802, were about his disillusionment with Revolutionary France. He was aware of the difference in situation between the present and ten years earlier. In the early 1790s France had represented his highest ideals of liberty, whereas by the turn of the century France had become a synonym for tyranny and a hated enemy. Bonaparte's rise to power would make France deteriorate even further, he believed. For him, the proper foundation of power must be based on wisdom, knowledge, motherly protection for the people and understanding of the people, but Bonaparte had none of these, only his military skill.²⁵

²⁴ Dorothy Wordsworth, 'The Grasmere Journal (1802)', in *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest de Sélincourt (2 vols., London, 1941), i, p. 174. Dorothy had played a leading role in the correspondence with Annette Vallon. The Wordsworths began to receive letters from France again in December 1801 once the negotiation for peace had started. See Dorothy Wordsworth, 'The Grasmere Journal', p. 92. William Wordsworth and Dorothy 'resolved to see Annette' in 22 March 1802. *Ibid.*, p. 128. According to Dorothy's journal, between December 1801 and August 1802, William Wordsworth received six letters from Vallon (on 16 and 22 February, 22 March, 7 and 12 June and 3 July), Wordsworth wrote three letters to Vallon (on 24 and 26 February, 15 May), and Dorothy also wrote two letters to Vallon (on 14 June and 5 July). John Worthen has discussed the possible reasons that the Wordsworths went to see his ex-mistress after ten years' separation in his *The Gang: Coleridge, the Hutchinsons & the Wordsworths in 1802* (London, 2001), pp. 121-4.

²⁵ William Wordsworth, 'I griev'd for Buonaparte', in *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems*,

Thus, Wordsworth and Dorothy showed no interest in witnessing the consequences of the Revolution and the development of Napoleonic society in Paris. Ironically, in August he observed that in Calais, 'Lords, Lawyers, Statesmen, Squires of low degree, Men known, and men unknown, Sick, Lame, and Blind' rushed to go to Paris 'to bend the knee / In France, before the new-born Majesty.'²⁶ He must have known that many among them were British people.

During the Peace of Amiens, especially by August 1802, there was a period when British women travellers judged Bonaparte more positively. It seems that due to the peace treaty agreed by Bonaparte and Prime Minister Addington, very few visitors described Bonaparte as unpleasant and they tended to give more positive accounts of Bonaparte's government. As Anne Plumptre (1760-1818) wrote, the recent restoration of peace had brought joy on both sides of the Channel, and 'rendered the names of Bonaparte and Mr. Addington very popular in both towns'.²⁷ Even conservative women such as Mary Berry and Frances Burney (1752–1840) did not criticize him, although Burney had been worried about his military power. Whether they viewed Bonaparte as the son of the Revolution, like many Tories, or regarded him as the destroyer of the Revolution, like some Whigs and radicals, all agreed that he had ended the state of anarchy and brought internal stability to France. There was a

1800- 1807, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca, 1983), pp. 157-8.

²⁶ Wordsworth, 'CALAIS, August, 1802,' in *ibid.*, p. 156.

²⁷ Anne Plumptre, *A Narrative of a Three Years' Residence in France, 1802-1805* (3 vols., London, 1810), i, p. 14.

prevailing longing for tranquility in the country, and their hopes were initially fulfilled under Bonaparte's lead.

Catherine Wilmot (?-1824) went to France with the family of Lord Mount Cashell as governess in November 1801. Wilmot and her travel companions saw Bonaparte in the Grand Review: 'He looked as pale as ashes, and the expression of his countenance was stern severity.'²⁸ His person was remarkably small, but well-proportioned. For her, the entire spectacle was splendid and she was 'more gratified than I ever was by a warlike pageant in all my life'.²⁹ Mary Berry went to Paris with Mrs. Damer in April 1802. In the account of her visit, we can discover her responses to Bonaparte. She had expected to see Bonaparte's military parade, which all the Parisians had been talking of for a month past. She wrote: '[A]ll I saw was a little man, remarkably well on horseback, with a sallow complexion, a highish nose, a very serious countenance, and cropped hair.'³⁰ She noticed the silence during the parade. It was the first time he had appeared in public since the peace, yet there was no applause or shouting when Bonaparte was riding along the lines near the spectators.³¹ Berry was invited to the court of the Tuileries to be presented to Napoleon Bonaparte and Madame Bonaparte. This time, with a manner different to the man of the parade, Bonaparte appeared in good humour. As she described, he had

²⁸ Paris, January 1802, in Wilmot, *An Irish Peer*, p. 35.

²⁹ Paris, January 1802, in *ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁰ Berry, *Extracts*, ii, p. 180.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 181-2.

‘a remarkable and uncommon expression of sweetness’, and, most important of all, of self-satisfaction and intelligence.³²

Maria Edgeworth (1768–1849) landed at Calais in October 1802. She was travelling in a family party with her father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, her stepmother, Frances Anne Edgeworth, and her stepsister, Charlotte. Maria Edgeworth wrote to her closest friend, Sophy Ruxton, about her observations of Napoleon Bonaparte in his Grand Review: that he had a pale woebegone countenance and he was ‘very little but much at ease on horseback. It is said that he never appears to so much advantage as on horseback.’³³ She was told by her friend Mr. Knox that Bonaparte informed those British who were presented to him, ‘L’Angleterre est une grande nation aussi bien que la France. Il faut que nous soyons amis!’³⁴ Edgeworth, however, thought Bonaparte’s friendship with Great Britain was simply false. As she put it, ‘Great men’s words’, like little men’s dreams, ‘are sometimes to be interpreted by the rule of contraries’.³⁵ She revealed in the comment her distrust of Bonaparte’s political policy and ambition.

On 14 August 1802, Amelia Opie (1769–1853) reached Calais with her husband and a party of friends, including Anne Plumptre, Samuel Favell and Mrs. Favell. This

³² *Ibid.*, p. 189.

³³ Maria Edgeworth to Sophy Ruxton, Paris, 8 December, 1802, in Maria Edgeworth, *Maria Edgeworth in France and Switzerland : Selections from the Edgeworth Family Letters*, ed. Christina Colvin (Oxford, 1979), p. 55.

³⁴ ‘England is as great a nation as France. It is necessary that we are friends.’ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

interval of peace gratified her long desire to visit France, especially Paris.³⁶ Amelia Opie had been a radical dissenter during the 1790s and a friend of most famous radical writers of the time: William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams and William Blake, among others. Although, unlike Wollstonecraft and Williams, she had no direct experience of the Revolution, she wrote several poems in support of Revolutionary ideals throughout the 1790s. In the later stage of her life, after the mid-1800s, as Ann Frank Wake points out, Opie felt disillusioned with Napoleon Bonaparte and began to consider herself not so much a radical as a reformer.³⁷ Her humanitarianism was shown in her life-long works, including poems and novels, which were against slavery, war, political violence and corruption.

Amelia Opie was very happy that she conversed with her political idol, Charles James Fox, and saw the great conqueror Napoleon Bonaparte in the Grand Review.³⁸ As she wrote, 'my frame still shook with the excitement I had undergone', while recalling this Parisian trip.³⁹ Opie's account of her travels in 1802 was written between 1829 and 1831, by which time she had changed her earlier political sentiments in favour of Bonaparte and republicanism, and had admitted that his

³⁶ Opie visited Paris three times; the first trip was in 1802, she then returned to Paris in 1829, and again in 1830 and 1831. See *Memoir of Amelia Opie*, ed. C. L. Brightwell (London, 1855), p. 97, 229, 245.

³⁷ See Ann Frank Wake, 'Indirect Dissent: 'Landscaping' Female Agency in Amelia Alderson Opie's Poems of the 1790s', in *Rebellious Hearts*, p. 265.

³⁸ For example, see *Memoir of Amelia Opie*, pp. 102-3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

proclamation as First Consul for life in August 1802 was his first step on the path to despotic power. But her account still described all her former enthusiasm for Bonaparte back in 1802. Bonaparte was a short pale man with bright, restless and expressive eyes.⁴⁰ She gazed on him with every nerve trembling. Her only disappointment during the Review was that she heard no shouts or applause which greeted Bonaparte, which might have implied that ‘there was no expression heard of animating popular feeling’.⁴¹ Anne Plumptre’s comment on Bonaparte was highly favourable. He had a ‘martial and commanding air’ on horseback and in the midst of his troops, and impressed spectators with the idea that he was of an extraordinary race of men.⁴² His smallness was scarcely observable.⁴³ In Plumptre’s eye, his features revealed his strong mind, which reminded her of ‘an ancient Roman’: ‘in the ardour of battle he may resemble the Roman warrior, and in his contemplative moments in the senate, the philosophy’.⁴⁴

Frances Burney was one among the few British woman visitors who revealed a feeling of anxiety for future political stability while viewing Bonaparte’s Grand Review. She took her son to meet her French husband, Alexandre-Jean-Baptiste Piochard d’Arblay (1754–1818), in Paris, in April 1802.⁴⁵ For Burney, Bonaparte’s

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-10.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁴² Plumptre, *a Three Years’ Residence*, i, p. 109.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-10.

⁴⁵ When the peace preliminaries were signed, M. d’Arblay went back to his country of France and

character was impressive: his eyes and every feature strongly marked his ‘Care, Thought, Melancholy, and Meditation’, which revealed his genius and seriousness and penetrating ability.⁴⁶ While he was on horseback, he had a military and commanding air.⁴⁷ In contrast to most British travellers’ excitement at seeing the Grand Review and Bonaparte, however, such a martial scene, for Burney, ‘with all the “Pomp and circumstance of War”’ only saddened her. As she wrote, ‘all of past reflection - and all of future dread - made the whole of the grandeur of the martial scene, and all the delusive seduction of the martial music, fill my Eyes frequently with Tears-’.⁴⁸

Because of her humanitarianism and anti-nationalism, and of her own marriage to a French émigré, she sympathized with France’s ill-fate after the Revolution, which had depressed M. d’Arblay. Burney sensed the continued tension between France and Britain, yet there was still a faint hope within her that this fragile peace would be maintained longer. As we can see, according to the observations of the British women, no matter whether radicals or conservatives, they were overwhelmed by the martial scene and military air of Bonaparte. Those who cared about the situation of Britain

delighted in any opportunity to resume his profession as a career soldier. But he went on to negotiate with Bonaparte that he could not fight against Britain, the country of his wife and in which he had lived for nine years. In March 1802 he was informed that his terms could not be accepted and his commission was annulled. He was warned by the French government that he would do well to remain a year in France before returning to England. See Joyce Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 310-11.

⁴⁶ Frances Burney to Charles Burney, Paris or Monceaux, 5-6 May 1802, in *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay)*, ed. Joyce Hemlow *et al.* (12 vols., Oxford, 1972-84), v, pp. 313-14.

⁴⁷ Frances Burney to Charles Burney, Paris or Monceaux, 5-6 May 1802, in *ibid.*, pp. 314-15.

⁴⁸ Frances Burney to Charles Burney, Paris or Monceaux, 5-6 May 1802, in *ibid.*, p. 314.

and France, during the Amiens Treaty, wanted to believe that Bonaparte would lead France to a better future, as long as he would restrain his military ambition.

C. Napoleonic France during the Peace of Amiens

The effects of the Revolution were seen everywhere on French territory, especially the destruction of monasteries and nunneries. Most British travellers, no matter whether they were conservatives, Whigs or radicals, were seized with a melancholy feeling on witnessing such sad consequences of the recent events. Mary Berry wrote on 11 March 1802 on the way to Montreuil that the ‘melancholy and ruinous appearance’ of ‘the poor churches, all of which, even in the little villages, have their windows broken, the tops of their spires knocked off, and with most of them their roofs falling to pieces’.⁴⁹ On arriving at Calais, Anne Plumptre was struck by the devastation of this place as well. According to her impressions acquired from the travel accounts she had read before, this place had once been populous. Now monasteries and nunneries were destroyed. Scenes of ruin were everywhere in Calais. Yet it was not the only ruined place she saw. Sad effects of the Terror had taken possession of ‘all France’, and of which ‘we never ceased to see continual and melancholy traces wherever we travelled in the French territory’.⁵⁰ Some also noticed that most French people, whether the *ci-devants* or lower-class people, regretted the Revolution. Wilmot wrote to her

⁴⁹ Berry, *Extracts*, ii, p. 126.

⁵⁰ Plumptre, *A Three Years’ Residence*, i, p. 15.

brother from Paris in December 1801, 'Tis nonsense to talk of the French being Republicans'.⁵¹ During the first month after her arrival, Wilmot had heard thousands of complaints and regrets about the past and horror of the Terror, and these complaints were consequences of the Revolution. Although once the French had been charmed by the Revolution's liberty and its republicanism, according to Wilmot's observation, now it was this liberty, which had produced anarchy and popular violence, that impelled a universal preference for monarchy.⁵²

Frances Elizabeth King (1757–1821) came to a similar conclusion to that of Wilmot. A Frenchman, who had been forced by the Jacobins to serve in the Sans-Culottes army, talked to King and her husband about his miserable experiences during the Revolution: 'Ah! Monsieur, avez-vous jamais vu une Révolution dans votre pays?' The man continued, 'La Revolution est une mauvaise chose, une vilaine chose, ah! que c'est vilain!'⁵³ Happily, now all the hardships he and his countrymen had endured and the cruelties they had experienced were terminated. They all rejoiced during the peace, which had released them from a military service they much detested.⁵⁴ King therefore maintained that to suppose France a land of liberty, or that the French had gained the smallest amount of what they fought for, was to deceive

⁵¹ Wilmot, *An Irish Peer*, p. 29.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

⁵³ 'Ah, mister, have you ever witnessed a revolution in your country?' 'The Revolution is a bad thing, an unpleasant thing. Ah! How unpleasant!' King, *A Tour in France*, p. 11.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

oneself as well as others. For these women, the Revolution produced nothing but terror, and the French were now experienced the hardship brought by the French Revolution.

Anne Plumptre observed that, although or perhaps because the French detested the Revolution, they welcomed Napoleon Bonaparte. As some female travel writers had shown, Plumptre was told by several persons in Marseille about their stories of sufferings they had experienced not only during the Terror, but ‘for the whole ten years the revolution had lasted’.⁵⁵ The French Revolution eventually disillusioned French people, but, Plumptre continued, Bonaparte put an end to all chaos, restored order in the country and brought his people new hope for a life of stability.⁵⁶ Some British visitors during the Peace of Amiens also thought Bonaparte the right man to lead post-revolutionary France. As Plumptre put it, the reestablishment of the Catholic religion was one factor that greatly increased Bonaparte’s popularity among his fellow-citizens.⁵⁷ Bonaparte’s Concordat with the Pope of 8 April 1802 restored Catholicism in France and let Sunday be kept as a day of religious rest once more. Frances Burney also witnessed Bonaparte’s popularity in April 1802. As she wrote to her friend, ‘Your favourite Hero is excessively popular at this moment from three successive grand events, all occurring within the short time of my arrival – The

⁵⁵ Plumptre, *A Three Years’ Residence*, iii, p. 371.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, i, p. 14.

Ratification of the Treaty of Peace – the Restoration of Sunday, Catholic Worship, - & the amnesty of the Emigrants.’⁵⁸ On one Sunday, at a little hamlet near Claremont, Burney was told by two old women that ‘they had ALL lost le bon Dieu for these last 10 years, but that Buonaparte had now found him!’ This was the happiest day of their lives!⁵⁹ In another cottage, some poor men said they were now content with their destiny. They could bear all their sufferings and hardships now for the reason that ‘they might now hear mass, and their souls would be saved’.⁶⁰

Anne Plumptre also heard many sad stories of the Frenchmen’s experiences during the Revolution and the Terror. While these Frenchmen revealed their hatred for the Revolution, they relied on Bonaparte, a ‘very great’ as well as ‘religious’ man, and believed that under his leadership all troubles were passing.⁶¹ Burney was told many miserable stories about the Terror as well. When she was in England, she had heard lots of these stories about the Terror. Despite her pro-Burkean stance in British political culture, she had judged such stories to be exaggerated. Now, hearing these Frenchmen’s experiences directly, she had to admit that this was a period of wanton violence, and extremely few French people spoke up for the Revolution. Burney

⁵⁸ Frances Burney to Miss Planta, Paris, 27 April 1802, in *Journals and Letters*, v, pp. 294-5.

⁵⁹ Frances Burney to Charles Burney, Paris, 15-19 April 1802, in *ibid.*, p. 239.

⁶⁰ Frances Burney to Charles Burney, Paris, 15-19 April 1802, in *ibid.*, p. 239; Frances Burney to Margaret Planta, Paris, 21 April 1802, in *ibid.*, p. 258.

⁶¹ Plumptre, *A Three Years’ Residence*, i, pp., 14-15. Plumptre wrote, ‘An old man at the custom-house at Calais with whom I had a good deal of conversation, and who said he had been there more than forty years, after giving me a very affecting detail of the sufferings he had experienced in the revolution, particularly mentioning that he had lost two sons killed in the army, finished by saying, that he hoped now all their troubles were at an end, for that Bonaparte was not only a very great, but was also a religious man’.

found, however, that the French appreciated Bonaparte and delighted in the restoration of Catholicism. Whereas Mariana Starke's praise for Bonaparte's defeat of the Roman Papacy revealed her anti-Catholic patriotism, Burney's delight in the restoration of Catholicism indicated her Burkean opinion that Catholics were still Christians, and Christianity was one of the essential elements of human civilization and of the rule of morality.⁶² Thus, Bonaparte had done the right thing for France. Both women were conservatives, but their attitudes towards Bonaparte and Catholicism were different.

As we have seen, British people tried to define Napoleon Bonaparte's place in the French political spectrum, and asked, according to Stuart Semmel: 'Did he simply represent another form of Jacobinism? Would he oversee a more orderly version of Jacobin democracy (or a more effective Jacobin terror)? Or was he an incipient monarch, bent on founding his dynasty?'⁶³ British writers responded to the questions and portrayed Bonaparte's government not only based on their eye-witness experiences, but also embellished with their political imagination. Edward Said's work on orientalism implies that the western construction of 'the other' is largely a by-product of western processes of self-definition. Similarly, Bonaparte's France became an imaginative 'Other' for British writers. He himself became the most

⁶² For example, Burke wrote, 'religion is the basis of civil society, and the source of all good and of all comfort'. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. L. G. Mitchell (Oxford, 1999), p. 90.

⁶³ Stuart Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (New Haven and London, 2004), p. 21.

notorious focus for British travellers during the Peace of Amiens. How Bonaparte was represented reflected how Britons defined themselves. As Said maintained, 'In any instance of at least written language, there is no such thing as a delivered presence, but a *re-presence*, or a representation.'⁶⁴ Penned by those who had seen him directly, Bonaparte was portrayed variously according to the writers' own political opinions. Nevertheless, no matter what political stance these British women took, before Bonaparte's proclamation as Consul for life and no matter whether they agreed that Bonaparte was a follower of the French Revolution or not, all agreed that Bonaparte enjoyed popular support. Most British women travellers were happy to hear about the Concordat which Bonaparte had made with Pope Pius VII in April 1802. This appeared to mean the return of old values and morality of the people, and suggested that, at least on the matter of religion, in the words of Grainger, 'the excesses of the Revolution were over'.⁶⁵

D. Bonaparte's Growing Dictatorship

Very different from the accounts of Anne Plumptre and Frances Burney were those of Frances Elizabeth King, a Tory woman, who observed that the French detested not only the Revolution but also Bonaparte's government. Arriving in France in mid-August, 1802, by which time Bonaparte had declared himself First Consul for life,

⁶⁴ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978), p. 21.

⁶⁵ Grainger, *The Amiens Truce*, p. 92.

and revealed his military ambition again, King witnessed Napoleonic society with the political bias born of British superiority. For King, the French nation was now in a state of slavery and was governed by 'so despotic a tyrant'.⁶⁶ Although the French were extremely dissatisfied with their government, the strict policing ensured they did not dare to express these sentiments openly. They chose to speak to the British, however, and, during King's stay in France, as she wrote, 'we heard nothing but dissatisfaction of the present, and regret for the past'.⁶⁷ Even those who used to play an active role during the Revolution now believed they were being deceived. One of their travelling companions from Abbeville was a good friend of the third Consul, Charles-François Lebrun, and held a place under the present government. He told her that 'he was certain there was scarce a man in the kingdom there, who would not gladly restore the ancient government just as it was, to get rid of the present'.⁶⁸ This man continued to point out that Bonaparte's attempt to convert the regime into his personal dictatorship apparently disappointed and shocked many French liberal republicans. Thus, King reached a conclusion similar to that of Wilmot: that republicanism and the new philosophy of liberty and equality were almost extinct, and religion was nearly in the state that it had been under the *ancien régime*.⁶⁹

Frances Elizabeth King was a follower of the conservative Edmund Burke and

⁶⁶ King, *A Tour in France*, p. 83.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-5.

Hannah More. She criticized Bonaparte's extravagance and hypocrisy by pointing out that his behaviour was against the principles of the Revolution, which were announced everywhere in France and its territories. Not only his dress and manners, but also his extravagance and the splendour of his establishment, palaces and mode of life, exceeded all belief. The Tuileries Palace and St. Cloud were, according to King, 'as sufficient for the magnificent of the *Grand Monarch*', but not equal to the principles of the Revolution.⁷⁰ She heard that Bonaparte had spent above 300,000 *livres* on furniture for St. Cloud in three years, but he was not satisfied with all this magnificence. He intended to refit and furnish Versailles in the same style. King therefore ended this discussion of Bonaparte's extravagance by saying that 'it is certainly as curious a burlesque upon equality, as his government is upon liberty'.⁷¹ King followed the view of many Whigs that Bonaparte was a betrayer of the principles of the Revolution. Bonaparte did not view himself as an enemy of the French Revolution, yet many contemporaries would not have agreed. How these female writers analyzed the First Consul signified how they identified their own political culture. In addition, one may follow Mary Berry's thought that if British conservatives wished France to go back to monarchy under a king, why did it matter whether the Bourbons or the Bonapartes led the kingdom? Maybe because

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

Bonaparte's original ambition was based on the ideals of the Revolution, or because he was originally a Jacobin, a usurper of the *ancien régime*, or because he had shown his ambition to conquer Europe, Bonaparte could not be accepted by most Tories. As pointed out previously in this chapter, most British visitors agreed that France was under the control of a military dictatorship. Such a despotic government, which had claimed power on the basis of defending liberty, aroused the British people's curiosity. Napoleon Bonaparte's political nature was complex; he was, according to a contemporary observer, a Jacobin as well as a dictator, combining 'the two extremes of despotism and of democracy'.⁷² Such a type of government thus brought many different responses. How they viewed Bonaparte revealed how they judged the French Revolution, which was not yet that far distant, as well as how they indentified themselves. As we can see, Bonaparte continued to be criticized as despotic, extravagant and false by British conservatives; the *ancien régime* had shared the same condemnation decades before. These British women continued a hostile attitude to what the French had done. By doing so, they highlighted their Britishness.

Most British Whigs and some radicals who had supported the Revolution ideals thought that the French nation should take the British constitution and government as their best model and regarded the British system as the only way to achieve liberty

⁷² [Anon.], *Thoughts on the Relative State of Great Britain and of France, at the Close of Mr. Pitt and Administration in 1806* (London, 1806), pp. 26-7. Quoted in Semmel, *Napoleon*, p. 33.

and stability. The Revolution had indeed tried to follow the British constitution, but had failed. Plumptre stressed that this group of people felt disappointed with France because they thought ‘the French, having undergone a great revolution, must have adopted English laws, English taste, English manners’, and these were the only objects that were worth obtaining by going through a revolution.⁷³ She went on, ‘What then was their astonishment, when they found that Frenchmen were still Frenchmen, and were not transformed into Englishmen!’⁷⁴ In Plumptre’s view, the French Revolution was but a feverish delirium and, once the delirium passed, France returned to her former habits. As she put it, Voltaire had written about liberty and the French nature many years before the French Revolution: ‘Sometimes I am tempted to believe that the sort of liberty which we enjoy in France, is precisely that which best suits us: woe unto us if ever we should take it into our heads to be free, after the manner of Athens or England!’⁷⁵ According to Plumptre, Voltaire might have been aware of the approaching storm of revolution and might have become convinced ‘how ill his fellow-countrymen were prepared for any degree of liberty, might be led in consequence to make these reflections’.⁷⁶

Although during the ‘the delirium of fever’ Frenchmen had struggled in support of republicanism, as Plumptre argued, their natural strength would not support them.

⁷³ Plumptre, *A Three Years’ Residence*, i, p. 147.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

This fever speedily passed, and these unnatural phenomena passed too. Frenchmen again returned to their accustomed habits and former self under a monarchy. The Revolution was by no means fruitless, but, the enthusiasm of republicanism subsided into ‘a renewed love of monarchy’, which must be different from the corrupt *ancien régime*.⁷⁷ Now Frenchmen under a Consul, to Plumptre, became very similar to Frenchmen under a king. It accorded with their nature and was the best way to achieve their political happiness.

Plumptre therefore stressed that there was no need to follow the British model, which was contrary to French nature. In her opinion, though Bonaparte’s government was absolute, there was freedom in religious opinions and there were no ‘feudal tenures’, ‘corvées’, ‘seigneurial rights’, ‘game laws’, ‘oppressive and overgrown hierarchy’, ‘privileged orders’, etc.,⁷⁸ all of which made his regime different from the previous one under Louis XVI. Moreover, she continued, Bonaparte was setting a plan for ‘education’ all over France in order to train the minds of the French in the habits of ‘reasoning’ and ‘reflection’, and to let his people understand the true nature of ‘freedom’, so that a rational system of liberty could last long in this France.⁷⁹ This method, in her view, was far better than the revolutionaries’ high cry for freedom and blindly running after these ‘wild’ and ‘impracticable’ theories without proper and

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, iii, p. 382.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

systematic plan during the 1790s.⁸⁰ Plumptre therefore stressed that ‘we are not authorized in calling him [Bonaparte] tyrant,⁸¹ because he instructed his people in the knowledge of rational freedom and their civil rights, then the principles of liberty and equality could apply to his kingdom successfully.⁸²

While both Mary Wollstonecraft and Anne Plumptre sympathized with the causes of the Revolution and agreed that to render the causes ‘useful and permanent’⁸³ they must be suited to each particular nation, their views about this country’s natural character and future development were different. Wollstonecraft thought that the French character, lacking proper cultivation of mind and feeling, was fatal to the Revolution and republicanism. So she was thinking of gradual social reform, especially educational reform, which might be a better way to fulfil her democratic ideals in each different country according to its differential development. Plumptre agreed with Wollstonecraft that the French were not suited to carrying through Revolution principles. But she thought there was nothing wrong with the French character. They simply needed to be trained to be more rational and to understand true liberty. For her, it was republicanism which was unnatural for the French character and was therefore deemed to have caused the failure of the Revolution. Each nation

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 388.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 383-4.

⁸³ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796), printed in Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, *A Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and Memoirs of the Author of the ‘Rights of Woman’*, ed. Richard Holmes (London, 1987), Appendix.

had its own way towards future improvement, and monarchy was the system best suited to the French people. Under a monarchy, led by a great king, the French would proceed to true liberty and civilization.

Anne Plumptre's travel writing was published in 1810, by which time most British people had abandoned their enthusiasm for Bonaparte because of his hostage law, the resumption of war, the Berlin Decrees, and the Continental System, among other causes. But Plumptre maintained her political position and concluded her work with several chapters defending Bonaparte. In Semmel's words, Plumptre 'balanced each of Napoleon's alleged sins with a British equivalent', and struggled to be 'a devoted apologist'.⁸⁴ She examined those prejudices which pronounced Bonaparte a tyrant and cruel monster by paralleling the cases of Bonaparte with those of Britain, and justified that 'among the crimes with which he is charged, there are scarcely any that do not strictly come within the inevitable consequence of war'.⁸⁵ It was necessary to reevaluate Bonaparte and, as she put it, 'we must divest ourselves of prejudices which degrade us alike as a nation and as individuals, and be prevailed upon to contemplate things as they are, not as our deluders wish them to be'.⁸⁶ Apparently she rejected Burke's 'prejudice', which was proclaimed in his *Reflections* as a national inheritance, and supported the radical William Godwin, whose

⁸⁴ Semmel, *Napoleon*, p. 136.

⁸⁵ Plumptre, *A Three Years' Residence*, iii. P. 357.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 315-16.

celebrated Jacobin novel, *Caleb Williams* (1794), originally bore the title of *Things as They Are*.⁸⁷ Plumptre witnessed Napoleonic society directly, and she proved to her readers that speech in France was as free as in Britain, and the French people, on the whole, supported Bonaparte, for he restored the nation after the disaster of the Revolution in the 1790s and provided civic order and stability to his country.

Nevertheless, Frances Elizabeth King was right: Napoleonic France had many of the characteristics of a police state.⁸⁸ Bonaparte's officials employed secret agents on a wide variety of tasks to control over public opinions and keep the nation under surveillance. According to Michael Sibalís's research, which is similar to King's observation of Napoleonic France, 'the police were always very much concerned about people who complained and assiduously maintained a close watch on every manifestation of public opinion. ... the Ministry of General Police exercised tight censorship over every kind of publication'.⁸⁹ Yet Sibalís also emphasizes that there was no government, 'no matter how democratic and how committed to civil rights', which would not use some means to overcome conspiracy and political dissent.⁹⁰ Note that the British Loyalist Association had repressed the public expression of political opinion by dissent in the 1790s. After a decade of upheaval because of the

⁸⁷ About Burke's prejudice, see *Reflections*, p. 87.

⁸⁸ King, *A Tour in France*, p. 80.

⁸⁹ Michael Sibalís, 'The Napoleonic Police State', in *Napoleon and Europe*, ed. Philip G. Dwyer (Harlow, 2001), p. 82.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

Revolution and the Terror, it was regarded as necessary for Napoleonic government to maintain social and political order. Bonaparte's police were efficient. As Sibalis points out, his officials often 'ignored proper judicial procedures and systematically violated the civil rights' that the Revolution had proclaimed, and turned the nation into a despotism again.⁹¹ But, it needs to be stressed that his police state was much less excessive in comparison to what France had experienced during the Terror, and, as Sibalis points out, terror, such as 'kidnapping, torturing and killing them in secret', was never a tool of Napoleonic government.⁹² Plumptre was right in this respect to indicate that Bonaparte's rule might be absolutism, but not tyranny.⁹³ Bonaparte's measures successfully consolidated the country.

Whigs and radicals, generally speaking, were very unhappy with Bonaparte's despotism, which grew in a land which once had aroused great enthusiasm for freedom. They could no longer justify the ambition of Bonaparte after the proclamation of his Life Consulate in 1802. It appeared that Bonaparte did not intend to reconstruct a regime based on Revolution principles or republicanism. Thomas Paine was also disappointed by contemporary France, and was disillusioned with the slavish French politics.⁹⁴ Paine left France, therefore, and arrived at Baltimore,

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁹³ Plumptre, *A Three Years' Residence*, iii, pp. 383-8.

⁹⁴ Thomas Paine, who had once held out hope for Bonaparte's government, wrote: 'They [the French] do not understand anything at all of the principles of free government, and the best way is to leave them to themselves. You see they have conquered all Europe only to make it more miserable than it

America, on 30 September 1802. In fact, British female conservatives, Whigs, and radicals, in spite of their different interpretations of Bonaparte's historical position, all began to reveal their revulsion at Bonaparte's militarism and growing dictatorship after August 1802, except for Plumptre. Most of them believed that Napoleonic France was under authoritarian rule and was taking a path toward a militaristic empire.

Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy returned to England on 29 August 1802.⁹⁵

Dorothy did not write about Bonaparte and his government in her diary. Their August trip apparently went smoothly, without being affected by political events. As Dorothy wrote, 'We walked by the seashore almost every evening with Annette and Caroline, or Wm. and I alone.'⁹⁶ By depicting the sublime night scene during their walks by the seashore, however, she also revealed her affection for England by positioning France as 'the other'. She looked towards the west and thought about England frequently:

[W]e had delightful walks after the heat of the day was passed away – seeing far off in the west the coast of England like a cloud crested with Dover Castle, which was but like the summit of the cloud – the evening star and the glory of the sky.⁹⁷

Now came in view, as the evening star sank down, and the colours of the

was before', quoted in John Goldworth Alger, *Napoleon's British Visitors and Captives, 1801-1815* (Westminster, 1904), p. 140. Paine criticized Bonaparte's government: 'Republic! Do you call this a republic? Why they are worse off than the slaves at Constantinople ... I know of no republic in the world except America, which is the only country for such men as you and I. It is my intention to get away from this place as soon as possible, and I hope to be off in autumn. ... I have done with Europe and its slavish politics', quoted in Alger, *Napoleon's British Visitors*, p. 140. See also Claey's, *Thomas Paine*, p. 34.

⁹⁵ Dorothy Wordsworth, 'The Grasmere Journal', p. 175.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

west faded away, the two lights of England, lighted up by Englishmen in our country, to warn vessels off rocks or sands. These we used to see from the pier, when we could see no other distant objects but the clouds, the sky, and the sea itself: All was dark behind. The town Calais seemed deserted of the light of heaven, but there was always light and life and joy upon the sea.⁹⁸

Dorothy's writings and her brother's poems often shared similar views, even the same words. Wordsworth's 'Fair Star of Evening, Splendor of the West, Star of my Country!' perfectly expressed Dorothy's patriotic feelings for their beloved country.⁹⁹

In contrast to the darkness of France, England was like a night star shining over the sea. Dorothy and William arrived back at Dover on 30 August 1802: 'We both bathed, and [sat] upon the Dover Cliffs, and looked upon France with many a melancholy and tender thought.'¹⁰⁰ Yet this 'thought' might come because of their concern for Vallon and Caroline as well.

William Wordsworth's French trip seemed to look back towards his passionate youth once again and to remind him of his past. As we have seen in Chapter 7, Wordsworth had chosen to embrace his beloved English life, family and nation. During this trip, he had dealt with the long unresolved problem with his French family as well. Thus, he returned to Grasmere, and married Mary Hutchinson, his childhood friend, in October 1802.¹⁰¹ He left behind his youthful aspirations for the Revolution

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

⁹⁹ Wordsworth, 'COMPOSED BY THE SEA-SIDE, near CALAIS, August 1802', in *Poems*, p. 155

¹⁰⁰ Dorothy Wordsworth, 'The Grasmere Journal', p. 175.

¹⁰¹ We know nothing more about how Wordsworth, Dorothy, Vallon and Caroline spent their four weeks in Calais, what kind of relationship Wordsworth and Dorothy formed with Vallon and Caroline nor how Wordsworth felt about Vallon. According to Worthen, no letters which Wordsworth and

in France, and looked to the British constitution as a dependable system to protect the people's liberty and general happiness. This French trip of 1802 and the aggression and ambition of Bonaparte seemed to have consolidated Wordsworth's political outlook.

Many British visitors had heard rumours about Bonaparte's preparations for the next invasion of Europe and even of Britain. They felt more and more uncomfortable about their stay in Paris, and believed that, as Grainger puts it, France 'had fallen under the control of a military man of great ability and attractiveness, but a man who required the support of the French military to stay in power'.¹⁰² Indeed, Bonaparte did not rest during the peace. He continued his interventions in Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands, which aroused British distrust. While Britain and France were in dispute diplomatically in early March 1803, as Grainger points out, 'many people outside the diplomatic arena ... seem to have been confused rather than alarmed.'¹⁰³ Frances King wrote in her journal that that, in March 1803, 'we were all

Dorothy sent from France have survived. Neither did Dorothy write about their relationship. Note that Dorothy Wordsworth's diary of their stay in Calais in August was written afterwards in October 1802. See Worthen, *The Gang*, p. 225-6. But we do know one thing: that Wordsworth did not keep the vow he made in his youth to marry Vallon once he returned to France. Wordsworth had accepted a different style of life in the Lake District from his youthful passionate revolutionary life. According to the information given us in 1810s and 1820s, Wordsworth sent money to supply his French mistress and daughter and met them at least once more in 1820. Therefore, we can suggest that they had made a mutual agreement about the future, especially about their daughter's future, in their 1802 reunion. In addition, Dorothy kept up her correspondence with Vallon after the Wordsworths went back to England. See Robert Gittings and Jo Manton, *Dorothy Wordsworth*, p. 136, 190, 205-10, 227-8, 229, 267; and Worthen, *The Gang*, pp. 225-34.

¹⁰² Grainger, *The Amiens Truce*, p. 98.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

electrified by a rumour of another war'.¹⁰⁴ British visitors became increasingly uneasy because they had noticed the diplomatic actions in April.¹⁰⁵ Many of them prepared to leave France at this moment. King noted that it was the order of day to promote war between France and Britain, thus, as she wrote, 'the most judicious prepared immediately for their departure, and determined on no account to remain at Paris after the ambassador quitted it'.¹⁰⁶ She and her husband left France in mid-April 1803.

In London, the declaration of war came on 16 May 1803. Stories of France's bad faith and aggressive actions spread among the British public, even though there was bad faith on both sides.¹⁰⁷ Bonaparte officially declared war in Paris on 20 May. On 23 May Bonaparte made a decree that 'all the English enrolled in the militia from the age of 16 to 60, holding a commission from his Britannic Majesty' should be detained.¹⁰⁸ Bonaparte's officials executed the decree beyond the exact word; consequently, all British male civilians of all professions and ages were rounded up.

¹⁰⁴ King, *A Tour in France*, 85.

¹⁰⁵ For the details of diplomatic negotiation, see Grainger, *The Amiens Truce*, pp. 178-209.

¹⁰⁶ King, *A Tour in France*, 86.

¹⁰⁷ It needs to be stressed that, for the European states, Britain looked to be a dangerous aggressor at this point. According to Brendan Simms, they equated 'French pretensions to universal monarchy in Europe' and 'British hegemony overseas'. As he puts it, taking the Armed Neutrality of 1800-1801 as example, 'The idea that it was Britain, rather than Napoleon, which stood against the world had a wide currency, and was encouraged by Napoleonic propaganda.' Throughout the 1800s and 1810s, there were many records by British commanders or diplomats of bad humour towards Britain, and that the British were everywhere detested. See Brendan Simms, 'Britain and Napoleon', in *Napoleon and Europe*, p. 194. See also A. D. Harvey, 'European attitudes to Britain during the French revolutionary and Napoleonic era', *History*, 63(1978), 356-65.

¹⁰⁸ See Grainger, *The Amiens Truce*, p. 200. See also Michael Lewis, *Napoleon and his British Captives* (London, 1962), pp. 22-4.

This extreme order shocked the British, and rendered about 700 to 800 Britons, who had failed to return home after the resumption of war, prisoners of war for the next ten years.¹⁰⁹ Mary Berry was in Geneva, which was one of Bonaparte's states, with her father and sister in May 1803. At midnight on 27 May, they were wakened by Lord John Campbell, with the news that the British were arrested in Lyons and the same order might arrive at Geneva the next morning. They hurried to Lausanne in the Helvetic Republic on 28 May.¹¹⁰ Maria Edgeworth and her company were advised by M. le Breton to leave France because of the preparations for war.¹¹¹ They arrived in London on 10 March, and knew that war was imminent. Richard Lovell Edgeworth sent an urgent letter to his son Lovell to Geneva. Lovell, however, was going to France. He was detained in Verdun until 1814.¹¹² British women and little children were allowed to leave France, although some met difficulties while leaving. Some stayed in France for particular reasons. Plumptre, known as a Napoleonist, travelled in France until 1805; Catherine Davies (1773-1841) was governess to the Murat family from 1803 to 1814 in Paris and the Naples; and Frances Burney could not return to England because of her French husband's military career.¹¹³ In May 1803, the

¹⁰⁹ For the details of Bonaparte's British captives, see Grainger, *The Amiens Truce*, pp. 200-2; Alger, *Napoleon's British Visitors and Captives*, ch. 4; and Lewis, *Napoleon and his British Captives*.

¹¹⁰ Berry, *Extracts*, iii, p. 258.

¹¹¹ R. L. Edgeworth to Charlotte Sneyd, Paris, 27 Jan 1803, in Edgeworth, *Maria Edgeworth in France and Switzerland*, p. 87.

¹¹² Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth: A Literary Biography* (Oxford, 1972), p. 197. See also Alger, *Napoleon's British Visitors and Captives*, p. 179.

¹¹³ At the end of 1802 M. d'Arblay's hope of claiming his heredity and military career was wholly frustrated. General de Lauriston successfully persuaded Bonaparte to grant M. d'Arblay permission to

resumption of war seriously distressed the d'Arblays. Although Burney was not arrested, and she had enjoyed her stay in France,¹¹⁴ she had planned to return to England in October 1803 and to accompany her old father, Dr. Burney. 'If the War indeed proves inevitable', Burney wrote, 'what a heart-breaking position is ours!'¹¹⁵ As a woman whose heart belonged to two countries, her grief at the situation was extreme.¹¹⁶ Her last letter which reached Dr. Burney before the resumption of war prayed for her dearest father and for peace: 'I cannot – in the disordered state of my nerves from this bitter stroke, do more now than pray Heaven to bless & preserve my beloved - dearest Father - & to restore the Nations to peace - & Me to his arms!'¹¹⁷

Bonaparte's hostage law provoked outrage and derision among the British and British press. As we shall see in the next chapter, most British people revealed a more hostile attitude towards Napoleonic France in the next decade beginning in 1803. They experienced a life in dread of French invasion. The majority had given up any

retire in April 1803. The grant also made it impossible for him and his family to leave France. As Burney wrote to her father, 'He has just received the *Retraite* – which proves but £62:10:0 or 1500 francs, *pr. ann.*! – He expected double - ! but 'tis a mark of being under Government protection, & that is so much! – you will easily, however, conceive how completely it makes it impossible for him to quit his Country during the War'. Frances Burney to Charles Burney, 14 May 1803, in *Journals and Letters*, v, p. 447.

¹¹⁴ The d'Arblays purchased a house at Passy in October 1802 and led a cheerful and retired life in this picturesque country village in the outskirts of Paris. Burney spoke fluent French and could communicate with the locals well. Further, because of her husband, she had many *ci-devant* friends. Thus, she did not feel alien to the French communities, even to the lower class people. She at least shared their delight in the restoration of Catholicism. In her journals, their French friends were kind, lively, intelligent and charming, and the locals were pleasant and nice. Nothing appears like the prevailing British view of the French as immoral and insincere. See Frances Burney to Charlotte Cambridge, November 1802, Passy, in *ibid.*, pp. 393-6; Frances Burney to Miss Planta, 19 December 1802, in *ibid.*, pp. 397-404. Although she disliked Napoleon, at least she had been happy personally. See Frances Burney to Mrs. Waddington, 3 July 1815, in *ibid.*, viii, pp. 282-6.

¹¹⁵ Frances Burney to Mrs. Locke, Passy, 30 April 1803, in *ibid.*, v, p. 444.

¹¹⁶ Frances Burney to Mrs. Locke, Passy, 30 April 1803, in *ibid.*, p. 446.

¹¹⁷ Frances Burney to Charles Burney, 14 May 1803, in *ibid.*, p. 448.

hope they had once had of Bonaparte. While Napoleonic France could no longer pretend to be a revolutionary force in the following wars, most British people carried no enthusiasm for the French Revolution either. They believed more than ever in Burke's insistence that Britain had preserved social order while protecting people's liberty in the best possible way, and considered Bonaparte to be their common enemy. Popular patriotism and heightened British nationalism were therefore produced in this age.

CHAPTER 9

POLITICAL RESPONSES TO NAPOLEON: 1814-1815

This chapter continues the discussion of British women travellers' responses to Napoleon Bonaparte and explores British female travel writings of 1814 and 1815 which tend to demonstrate a bitter tone against Napoleon and an endorsement of their British identity. War between Britain and France commenced again in May 1803. Following Bonaparte's hostage law in May 1803, as we have seen at the end of the last chapter, travel between France and Britain was out of the question until 1814. Those British travellers who had failed to return home by this date became detainees of war. Moreover, in December 1804 Bonaparte crowned himself emperor. The Whigs' and radicals' hopes of Bonaparte were entirely disappointed following his coronation, and the Tories were reluctant to recognize the new emperor. Bonaparte built up his army from 1798 to 1805, encamped along the French coastline, intending to conquer Britain.¹ Although Britain was not seriously invaded,² and was not overrun by the French armies, the British fear of invasion was greater than ever before. As Linda Colley has stressed, those who lived at this time could not know what would happen next and they were not sure whether Britain would escape Napoleon's

¹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2nd edn., London, 2005), p. 286, 305-6; Stuart Semmel, *Napoleon and the British* (New Haven and London, 2004), pp. 19-21; and Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500-2000* (London, 1989), pp. 160-7.

² There was a failed invasion in Ireland in 1796, a brief French landing in Wales in 1797 and again in Ireland in 1798. In addition, the threat of invasion in 1803 and 1804 was very real.

conquest.³ This fear provided Britain with a powerful strength with which to oppose the enemy. By 1810 Napoleon's army had defeated almost all the European powers. Most British people thought that France was destroying despotic European governments only to substitute another more despotic tyranny. Now, for most Britons, no matter what their political position had previously been, Napoleon Bonaparte became an object of abhorrence.

As F. J. McCunn maintained in *The Contemporary English View of Napoleon*, 'the experiment of peace' had been tried in the Treaty of Amiens and had failed and, henceforth, 'the hostility of England is turned more and more from the French nation to its ruler, and therefore adopts a more personal and a more bitter tone.'⁴ Such a bitter tone, fully against Napoleon, promoted the embryonic sense of British nationalism, and pervaded the travel writings of 1814 and 1815. Flocks of British men and women again visited Paris after the fall of Napoleon, and many of them, as before, wrote travel journals and subsequently published them. While in the 1790s, as Chapters 3 to 7 have shown, a number of women travellers agreed with the Revolution principles and wrote about abstract possibilities of future perfectibility, now, in 1814 and 1815, most British women travellers viewed their British constitution as the only way to bring stability and liberty. They denied those political

³ Colley, *Britons*, p. 286, 305.

⁴ F. J. McCunn, *The Contemporary English View of Napoleon* (London, 1914), p. 64.

principles and ideals which were not rooted in practice. Burkean elements therefore became dominant in their writing and thinking. Only one novel written during the author's journey abroad revealed a challenge to the *status quo* – Frances Burney's *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties* (1814). In the end, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley integrated her reflections on the French Revolution into her tale of *Frankenstein* (1818) during her travels in Geneva in 1816. She re-thought this age's enthusiasm and disillusionment, and, notwithstanding a pessimistic attitude towards humanity, her faith in the benefits of republicanism survived.

A. The Aftermath of War and New Hope for the Bourbons

During the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1814), many Britons justified their hatred for Bonaparte. For them, the existing British constitution and the established Church were the best systems to protect British subjects; in fact, Britain was the only country which not only kept her independence, but was also capable of helping other countries to re-gain their freedom in this period. For those writers who had been early supporters of the ideals of the Revolution, such as Amelia Opie, Wordsworth and Coleridge, the tension between their patriotism (in the modern sense) and their libertarianism was nearly resolved after 1803. They realized that their ideal political system was to be found in Britain after decades of international turbulence. Even the steadfast radical Helen Maria Williams welcomed the restoration of the Bourbons in

1815, though she had retained lifelong faith in the Revolutionary ideals. Radical activities, of course, had never come to an end; some pamphlets still called for reform and spoke for the miserable poor, and some other extremists were even eager for a French invasion.⁵ But such eagerness only made them more unpopular during wartime. During the Napoleonic wars, many who had supported republicanism had been disappointed by Bonaparte's behaviour, and had agreed that it was necessary to defend their country against invasion. The discussion of parliamentary reform, it was agreed, should be shelved at least during the war. As Linda Colley argues, there had been many Britons who felt dissatisfied with the social and economical conditions and the political orderings of the state, but they did not need a French invasion to solve their domestic problems.⁶ The British government now was much less worried about internal political unrest and dissent than in the 1790s. The widespread conservative propaganda now did not focus on the debate around liberty and men's natural rights, but instead on popular support for the war against Napoleon Bonaparte. When travel across the English Channel started again in 1814, therefore, many British women's travel journals, written by middle and upper-class women, displayed their heightened anti-Gallicanism and sense of British superiority. They defended the existing British-style social order and moral values by emphasizing how ruthless Napoleon's

⁵ See, for example, John Dinwiddy, 'England', in *Nationalism in the Age of the French Revolution*, ed. Otto Dann and John Dinwiddy (London, 1988), pp. 67- 9; and H. T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 62-77.

⁶ Colley, *Britons*, p. 310.

armies had been and the miserable life the French had experienced.

Anne Carter and her party arrived in Paris on 29 April 1814, just in time to witness the entrance of Louis XVIII. Throughout her series of letters, she endeavoured to tell her sister about the greatness of the British people, who were welcomed and respected by Frenchmen everywhere.⁷ As she wrote, since their arrival, French people ‘bowed, waved their hands, and offered us every possible civility and attention’, and acclamations of ‘Vive le Roi’, ‘Les Bourbons’ and ‘Le Regent d’Angleterre’ were heard everywhere.⁸ On the road to Paris, she kept writing about the lowliness of French people and of their manners, and the wretchedness of their houses and inns. Nevertheless, her complaints were mitigated by the extreme respect of the French for the British people and their acclamations of ‘Les Anglaises’. Carter proudly wrote to her sister that the French were ‘eager to speak and to show us every possible kindness’.⁹

In the aftermath of war, according to these British women travellers, villages and churches were destroyed, French traditional manners had disappeared, and the French kept complaining about the revolutionaries as well as about Napoleon.

Clarissa Trant (1800-1844) wrote that during her stay in Marseilles in the early

⁷ [Anon], *Letters from a Lady to her Sister, during a Tour to Paris, in the Months of April and May* (London, 1814). It seems from the British Library’s integrated catalogue that the author of this series of letters was Anne Carter. There are no further details about her.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

months of 1815 she had met many people who had lost everything during the French Revolution.¹⁰ According to her, these inhabitants were anxious to prove to British visitors their loyalty to the Bourbons, emotions which they had been forced to conceal during the Revolution.¹¹ Charlotte Anne Eaton (1788–1859, *née* Waldie) went to Brussels via Bruges and Ghent with her brother John and her sister Jane in June 1815. When she travelled to Alost, the Flemish peasants' cry of 'Success to the English, and destruction to the French' was heard everywhere.¹² An innkeeper of this town told Eaton that there was a universal detestation of Napoleon and of the French in Flanders. According to this innkeeper, they used to be happy, rich and good, now the trade, manufactories, and commerce had been destroyed, and the convents had been ruined.¹³ Wherever Eaton went, she heard the same sentiment of hatred towards the revolutionaries and Napoleon.

One day, in Paris, when Carter was walking in the Jardin des Tuileries, the words 'Les Anglaises! Les Anglaises!' were heard around the garden and the whole crowd followed her and her company wherever they went. Several gentlemen came

¹⁰ Clarissa Trant, *The Journal of Clarissa Trant 1800-1832*, ed. C. G. Luard (London, 1925), p. 42. During the Peninsular War, Clarissa Trant's father Sir Nicholas Trant was sent to Portugal as a military agent. He returned to England after the convention of Cintra, but went back to Portugal early in 1809 as part of the quartermaster-general's contingent. After he was made governor of Oporto in 1811 in the middle of the year, he wished his eleven-year-old daughter and six-year-old son Thomas to join him in Portugal. In October 1811 the Portuguese government conferred on him the title of knight commander of the Tower and Sword. In 1812, Nicholas Trant decided to retire and leave Oporto with his children. They did not return to England directly; they travelled through Portugal, sailed to Marseilles in 1815 and embarked on their European trip.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37

¹² An Englishwoman [Charlotte Eaton], *The Days of Battle; or Quatre Bras and Waterloo* (London, 1853), p. 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

forward and apologized for the pressure of the crowd by saying that their ‘anxiety and delight to see the English was so great’, thus they hoped Carter and her friends would excuse the eagerness of the French.¹⁴ Then she retreated into the Hall of the Tuileries. General d’Henin told British visitors that the enthusiasm of the French towards Britain was so great that ‘it would not be restrained’.¹⁵ Carter’s experience of being respected by the French people without doubt made her more content than ever to be born an Englishwoman. When she was waiting for the arrival of Louis XVIII, many people pressed forward and told her and her friends that: ‘We owe all these blessings to you’.¹⁶ Thus, she wrote, ‘Oh! how proud, how vain did I feel! yet not on my account, but for dear happy England!’¹⁷

As Trant recalled, child as she was at that time, she knew that the defeat of Napoleon’s army, ‘*La Grande Armée*’, meant a change in Europe’s fate.¹⁸ In 1814, after hearing the news that ‘the Allies had entered Paris’, ‘the restoration of the Bourbons’, and ‘Napoleon’s exile to the island of Elba’, Trant wrote, everyone looked pleased, acclaimed ‘*Vive le Roi*’ and made white cockades, the cockade of the Bourbons, although some might not have understood why and for what purpose they did so. Fireworks, balls, dinners and festivals followed every night.¹⁹ For Carter, this

¹⁴ *Letters from a Lady*, p. 44.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁸ Trant, *The Journal*, p. 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

was Paris' 'glorious moment' when she was released from 'tyranny and oppression', and once more breathed 'a purer freer air' because of the restoration of a Bourbon monarchy.²⁰ Although Paris was far inferior to Carter's 'happy dear old England' no matter whether in rivers, institutions, streets, squares, commerce, moral virtues or manners, she acknowledged that Paris now had the 'prospect and hope of better times'.²¹ As we can see from these paragraphs, according to the accounts of Carter and Trant, the French were very pleased at the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy; what is more, in the eyes of Carter, they had become Anglophile after the experience of the Revolution and war in those two decades and more.

The firm radical Helen Maria Williams now thought the Bourbons might bring liberty to France. As M. Ray Adams argues, it was not, after all, any Revolutionary government, but a liberal branch of the Bourbons - Louis XVIII - who might defend the constitution and protect people's liberty.²² After the fall of Napoleon and the return of the Bourbons in 1815, Helen Maria Williams published another volume of letters. She confessed that when Napoleon first appeared in France, she could not but behold him with enthusiasm:

[T]he daystar of liberty seemed to rise on the vine covered hills of France. I dreamt of prison doors thrown open, - of dungeons visited by the light of day, - of the peasant oppressed no longer, - of equal laws, a

²⁰ *Letters from a Lady*, p. 144.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

²² M. Ray Adams, 'Helen Maria Williams and the French Revolution', in *Wordsworth and Coleridge: Studies in Honor of George McLean Harper*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs et al. (Princeton, 1939), pp. 112-13.

golden age, in which that lived were to be happy.²³

Yet Napoleon had betrayed the principles of the Revolution and his proclamation of the Life Consulship and thereafter being crowned as emperor 'dispelled all illusion'.²⁴

She had been through tough times during the Napoleonic period. The emperor's hostility forced her to close her salon and she was wary of publishing anything between 1803 and 1815. As Williams wrote, 'The iron hand of the despotism has weighted upon my soul and subdued all intellectual energy'.²⁵ Now she was conscious of the consequences of the Revolution, and welcomed the return of the Bourbon monarchy. According to Adams, Williams claimed herself to be 'a friend of the Bourbons', because Louis XVIII had held a moderate liberal position at the beginning of the Revolution - like the Duke of Orleans, also known as '*Philippe Égalité*', who was guillotined during the Terror as a Girondist.²⁶ Williams had not given up her hopes for the goals of the Revolution, but she also realized the limitations of human nature in a pure democracy. Throughout her experiences in France from 1790 to 1815, she therefore recognized that a Revolutionary government did not necessarily bring democracy and general happiness; instead, she believed Louis XVIII would defend constitutional government against despotism, and in due

²³ Helen Maria Williams, *A Narrative of the Events which have taken place in France from the landing of Napoleon Bonaparte on the 1st of March 1815 to the Restoration of Louis XVIII* (London, 1815), p. 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

²⁶ Adams, 'Helen Maria Williams', p. 113.

course carry out the principles of the French Revolution. Her view on the methods for achieving future progress thus adjusted over time.

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) eloped with Mary Shelley (1797–1851), second daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, to Paris on 28 July 1814, in the company of Mary's stepsister, Claire. Mary and Percy Shelley bought a new notebook and began their account on the first day of the elopement as the beginning of their new life. Their journal entries for 28 July until 13 September 1814 were revised by Mary Shelley and published in 1817 under the title *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland*. Under the influence of William Godwin's and Mary Wollstonecraft's philosophy, Mary Shelley shared her parents' sympathy with the cause of the French Revolution as well as their awareness of the limitations of human nature from the late 1790s onwards.²⁷ Pamela Clemit has stressed that though we can trace the political and philosophical concerns of Godwin and Wollstonecraft all through Mary Shelley's novels, biographies and essays, Shelley did not imitate their thinking: 'Writing with an awareness of how French

²⁷ As we have seen in Chapter 2, Mary Shelley wrote to her friend Frances Wright about her feelings for her parents and their influence on her life-long political opinions: 'The memory of my Mother has been always been the pride & delight of my life.... Her greatness of soul & my father high talents have perpetually reminded me that I ought to degenerate as little as I could from those from whom I derived my being ... my chief merit must always be derived, first from the glory these wonderful beings have shed [? around] me, & then for the enthusiasm I have for excellent & the ardent admiration I feel for those who sacrifice themselves for the public good.' Mary Shelley to Frances Wright, 12 September 1827, in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *The Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*, ed. Betty T. Bennett (3 vols., Baltimore, 1983), ii, pp. 3-4. See also Pamela Clemit, *The Godwinian Novel: The Rational Fictions of Godwin, Brockden Brown, Mary Shelley* (Oxford, 1993), esp. ch. 5, 'Frankenstein: Mary Shelley's Myth-Making', pp. 139-74; Pamela Clemit, 'Frankenstein, Matilda, and the legacies of Godwin and Wollstonecraft', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Shelley*, ed. Esther Schor (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 26-44.

Revolutionary politics had unfolded through the Napoleonic era, Mary Shelley extends and reformulates the many-sided legacies of Godwin and Wollstonecraft in extreme, imaginatively arresting ways.²⁸ Born in the post-revolutionary age and growing up during the Napoleonic wars, she understood the potential danger of fulfilling rational philosophy and her approach and assessment of humanity were more similar to that of her parents' later period. She also digested the works of anti-Jacobins and conservatives, including Abbé Barruel and Edmund Burke,²⁹ and seemed to agree with some ideas of Burke, such as progressive reform.

The Shelleys were delighted during the first days of their trip and looked forward to witnessing the consequences of the 'great and extraordinary events' that had taken place in France from 1789 to 1814;³⁰ yet the towns and the people failed to meet their expectations. What they had anticipated was a revolutionized society, but all they witnessed were ruined towns and villages, and lower-class people with disgusting manners. What Mary Shelley saw was the aftermath of war. The couple recorded peasants' sufferings which were caused by the Revolution and the armies of Napoleon and the Allies. For instance, the village of Echemine had been once large and populous, but now the houses were ruined. The inhabitants looked dirty,

²⁸ Clemit, 'Frankensteinn, Matilda', p. 26.

²⁹ For the Shelleys' reading lists, see Gerald McNiece, *Shelley and the Revolutionary Idea* (Cambridge, 1969), esp. ch. II, 'The Literature of Revolution', pp. 10-41.

³⁰ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through a Part of France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland*, in *The Novels and Selected Works of Mary Shelley*, ed. Jeanne Moskal (8 vols., London, 1996), viii, p. 21.

indifferent and uneducated. All these were seen as the sad effects of recent events.³¹

Mary Shelley demonstrated her revulsion towards French peasants during the journey. When the Shelleys were preparing their dinner at Echemine, the inhabitants of the village around them were 'squalid with dirt' and their countenances expressed 'every thing that is disgusting and brutal'.³² The 'filthy' sight had destroyed their appetite. The miserable aftermath of the Revolution and war, in the view of Shelley, seemed to have made the people 'entirely detached from the rest of the world, and ignorant of all that was passing in it' - they did not even know that Napoleon Bonaparte had abdicated on 6 April 1814.³³ Shelley wrote in her private journal that although this village had been entirely ruined by the Cossacks, she could hardly pity these ignorant people.³⁴ As she wrote in the travel journal, while enjoying rural scenes, she did not show much interest in the uneducated villagers. She celebrated the sublime nature and beauty of lakes and mountains in Switzerland, but the Swiss appeared to her 'a people slow of comprehension and of action; but habit has made them unfit for slavery, and they would, I have little doubt, make a brave defence against any invader of their freedom'.³⁵ Shelley was captivated by the Rhine landscape, yet 'the lower order of smoking, drinking Germans', who travelled with

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁴ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *The Journals of Mary Shelley, 1814-1844*, ed. Paula R. Feldman and Diana Scott-Kilvert (2 vols., Oxford, 1987), i, p. 13.

³⁵ Mary Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, p. 31.

them in the same cabin, disgusted her.³⁶ Thus, removing all the unpleasant parts of her experience, her memory of the Rhine was presented as ‘the loveliest paradise on earth’.³⁷ Although knowing what she found to be their disgusting and wicked manners were the consequence of war, like the Russell sisters, Shelley seemed to think that these people should share some of the responsibility for this sad result. While her mother had tended to sympathize with the peasants and would have liked to educate the poor and give them political rights and liberty, Shelley did not show much sympathy with them in this travelogue and in her later writings. Shelley’s assessment of humanity was more negative than her mother’s. She saw the turmoil at the turn of the century and understood the uncertain strength of humans’ rational minds and the potential danger of fulfilling an abstract philosophy of democracy without proper restraint and guidance.³⁸ This trip offered material for her most famous work *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818).³⁹ The full story was completed during the Shelleys’ journey to Geneva in 1816.

Percy Shelley’s distant relatives, Frances Shelley (1787-1873) and her husband,

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁸ For Mary Shelley, an affectionate home seemed to be the most important and basic element of a person’s life as well as of a nation’s future perfectibility. Through her lifelong writings, she stressed parental affection and support, and idealized the bourgeois family. Furthermore, like her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, who believed all the political virtues sprang from the egalitarian family and family affections, Mary Shelley suggested that if political actions were based on domestic affections, then tyranny and war might be prevented.

³⁹ Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), ed. M. K. Joseph (Oxford, 1969).

Sir John Shelley (1772-1852), both monarchists, were in Paris in 1815.⁴⁰ Frances Shelley's reflections on post-revolution society were similar to those of Mary Shelley: French society did not benefit from the Revolution in these two decades. Mary Shelley was disappointed with the fact that there had been so few improvements; the eventful decades had only made the French indifferent to political change and lacking in enthusiasm for politics. Frances Shelley had an impression that insincerity was still one of the notorious characteristics of the French. 'What has the Revolution done for France?', Frances asked.⁴¹ For her, the Revolution and the revolutionaries had removed some abuses, but they had brought too much destruction to France and Europe.⁴² Conservative monarchist that Frances Shelley was, she apparently followed Edmund Burke's political view that liberty without restraints and tradition would lead to chaos and anarchy, and finally produce a military tyrant. Consequently, the French, in the eyes of Frances Shelley, were even more 'corrupt' than they had been previously.⁴³ Now, like Mary Shelley's observation about the indifference of the

⁴⁰ Frances Shelley was a Tory woman of the upper class. In 1795, she made the acquaintance and became a favourite of the poet William Cowper's cousin, Lady Hesketh. Lady Hesketh had resided on the Continent for a long time, chiefly in Italy. From her description of foreign countries, Frances was inspired with a passion for travelling. From her aunt Grace Dalrymple Elliott and her niece Georgiana Seymour, who returned to England after the Peace of Amiens (1802), Frances learnt about her aunt's experiences during the French Revolution, under the Terror, and how she was almost guillotined as a prisoner. But the war on the Continent hindered Frances Shelley from visiting France. Frances Shelley, *The Diary of Frances Lady Shelley 1787-1817*, ed. Richard Edgcumbe (London, 1912), pp. 42-5. Shelley, therefore, had desired to visit the Continent in the 1790s and 1800s, and the fall of Napoleon in 1814 made her wish possible. Yet when she and her husband were about to depart in March 1815, news arrived that Bonaparte had escaped from Elba and arrived in Paris. Their Parisian trip was deferred until 'the glorious 18th June 1815'. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

French, Frances Shelley indicated that, 'The French are become so heedless of events, that they live from hour to hour, apparently unconscious of the disasters that have befallen their proud, and once glorious, country.'⁴⁴ In this stream of indolence and indifference, the French felt uncertain about their future, and this popular sentiment would delay any attempt to 'redress the wrongs of the past'.⁴⁵ Thus, from her point of view, the evils of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic period were 'irreparable'.⁴⁶ As we can see, the experience of the threat of the French Revolution and the fear of war during the revolutionary decades made Britain appear more united and stable – most Britons did not hesitate to reveal their love for their constitution and country. In contrast, the experience of the Revolution and war, in the view of the British travellers, only made France disastrous and unstable, because most of the French lost confidence in their future. Frances Burney also pointed out the French people's feeling of uncertainty about their future. She criticized the French people's changeable attitudes towards their government: in 1802 the French acclaimed Bonaparte; now in 1815 they condemned him and welcomed Louis XVIII. This revealed, she reasoned, that they had no confidence in their country or its government.⁴⁷

B. War, Heroism and Nationalism

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁴⁷ Frances Burney to Mrs. Broome, Brussels, 3 July 1815, in *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney (Madame D'Arblay)*, ed. Joyce Hemlow *et al.* (12 vols., Oxford, 1972-84), viii, p. 287.

Wordsworth had given up republicanism completely after he returned to England in August 1802. Napoleon Bonaparte's aggressive invasions aroused his nationalistic view of European politics. In the next dozen years, he spoke in a reactionary Burkean tone; he stressed traditional values and praised the habitual affections and the essence of the British constitution. In addition, his works reflected the popular national feeling that had emerged during the Napoleonic wars that Britain was the only nation which could stand against Napoleon and that the British constructed their national identity by constantly contrasting themselves with their French 'other'. Writing in 1806, Wordsworth described Britain as, 'The last that dare to struggle with the Foe. 'Tis well! from this day forward we shall know / That in ourselves our safety must be thought.'⁴⁸ In 1811, Wordsworth pointed out that Napoleon was a special enemy of the British, because it was by contending with France that the British people improved their moral rightness: 'If a nation has nothing to oppose or to fear without, it cannot escape decay and concussion within.'⁴⁹ By opposing an enemy that was 'capable of resisting us [Britain]', to the poet, British virtue was thus preserved.⁵⁰ The national sentiment shown in the works of Wordsworth was expressed again and again in the travellers' accounts in 1814 and 1815.

⁴⁸ William Wordsworth, 'November, 1806', in *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800- 1807*, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca, 1983), p. 174.

⁴⁹ William Wordsworth to Major-General Sir Charles W. Pasley, on his 'Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire', 1811, in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. Ernest De Selincourt (4 vols., Oxford, 1969), ii, part i, p. 480.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 481.

Once Britons' earlier admiration for Bonaparte had passed, an extremely anti-Gallican period followed, and Napoleon became the target of execration and ridicule in British periodicals, pamphlets and caricatures. During the Napoleonic wars most Britons lived with the rumours of the French invasion and the nightmarish fear about the demonic Napoleon and his armies.⁵¹ The discourse of British women travellers in 1814 and 1815 was apparently influenced by loyalist propaganda, which, according to K. Watson, 'relied heavily on that element of contrast between life for the Frenchmen, tyrannized, impoverished and depraved, and that of the Englishmen, free, nourished and pure in his "free-born" status'.⁵² They often contrasted the political systems and living conditions in Britain with those in France and affirmed to their readers that the latter were inferior and disastrous. For them, the diabolical forces of Napoleon were abandoned by God, and the British army was defender of Christianity, nature, liberty and civilization, all of which France had tried to destroy since the Revolution. Stella Cottrell's article about francophobia in the Napoleonic era also points out that 'The broadsheets accounted for this extreme polarization into good and evil, right and wrong, by making reference either to God, or to nature, or the character/government and constitution dialectic, or to a combination of these'.⁵³

⁵¹ See Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2nd edn., London, 2005), pp. 283-319; and K. Watson, 'Bonfires, Bells and Bayonets: British Popular Memory and the Napoleonic Wars', in *War: Identities in Conflict 1300-2000*, ed. Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton (Stroud, 1998), pp. 95-112.

⁵² Watson, 'Bonfires, Bells and Bayonets', p. 107.

⁵³ Stella Cottrell, 'The Devil on Two Sticks: Franco-phobia in 1803', *Patriotism: The Making and*

Particularly when Britain joined in the Portuguese and Spanish campaign to oust the French from the Iberian Peninsula, moral force appeared to belong to the Iberians and the British. For first-generation Romantic writers, the spirit of liberty in France had been extinguished. For many of those who had once supported radicalism, this country formerly produced enlightened philosophy and nurtured the French Revolution and Bonaparte. The First Consul initially brought a reviving hope for liberty to the world, only to change into a tyrannical and demonic force, a characteristic which, as Colley points out, was often ascribed to the *ancien régime*.⁵⁴ France was now governed by a despot, who was opposed to the independence and liberty of the Spaniards and had also invaded Portugal in the Peninsular War. Most Britons believed that it was Great Britain which now led the moral crusade against Napoleon Bonaparte, the universal enemy of liberty and morality, and which would restore liberty to Europe.

As an observer of the Waterloo campaign in a close proximity, Charlotte Eaton's account in 1815 vividly sketched the emotional reactions of those people whose lives were affected by the war. Eaton was a very patriotic woman, like Anne Carter, whose travel account was full of the clichés of nationalism. Eaton was eager

Unmaking of British National Identity: Vol. I. History and Politics, ed. Raphael Samuel (London, 1989), p. 269.

⁵⁴ As Colley indicates, 'Long before 1803, the French had ceased to be viewed, even by many radicals, as liberators and exemplars for the unreformed states of Europe. Under Napoleon, the French reverted in the British imagination to what they had so often seemed in the past: spiritless victims of over-powerful government at home and ferocious exponents of military aggression abroad', Colley, *Britons*, p. 312.

and proud to display these glorious days of battle to her British readers. For her, the British army's 'heroic valour in combat', their 'noble magnanimity in victory', and their 'unshaken fortitude in suffering' should be held dear by every British heart.⁵⁵

After the battle of Waterloo, Eaton and her sister went to the battlefield with their brother's guard. Baptiste la Coste, Napoleon's former guide, told them several interesting accounts of Napoleon's behaviour during the battle:⁵⁶ In contrast to the Duke of Wellington, who was in the thick of the battle, Napoleon had disappeared before the end of the battle, as he had done in Egypt, in Moscow and at Leipzig, while 'his [Napoleon's] faithful veterans were still fighting with enthusiastic gallantry, and shedding the last drop of their blood in his cause!'⁵⁷ This was not the conduct of a general and of a hero. While Napoleon's admirers claimed that he was the greatest man who had ever lived, and that his only fault was ambition, Eaton maintained that his ambition was only selfishness: he was not for glory, not for the welfare of his subjects and the prosperity of his country, but for power, unbounded empire and unlimited dominion.⁵⁸ All in all, as Eaton stressed, Napoleon used his talents, opportunities and power not to save his country, but to destroy the world.⁵⁹ The Duke of Wellington was contrasted to Napoleon in character and conduct as a military

⁵⁵ Englishwoman, *The Days of Battle*, p. iv.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-7.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

leader, she argued, as well as in the cause for which they fought. Even when there was no prospect of success, Wellington exposed himself to the hottest fire, rode along the lines of his army and encouraged them.⁶⁰ During the most dangerous moments, the Duke roused the national pride of his British and allied army.⁶¹ She wrote, therefore, ‘the French fought to obtain plunder and aggrandizement’, and the British fought to fulfil their moral duty.⁶² Thus, the British army was viewed as a moral crusade for liberty against the violent and disastrous armies of Napoleon.

After the battle, as Eaton would describe it, the conduct of the two armies was different. She was told that the French had murdered numbers of their prisoners and treated other prisoners with cruelty and shut them up without food.⁶³ Napoleon’s army had previously done things of violence and cruelty during their triumphal progress from Egypt and the Mediterranean, to Europe and Russia, and hence, Eaton concluded, the names of the French and Napoleon were dreaded and detested by all European people.⁶⁴ Wherever Napoleon had been, there were traces of misery and desolation. Mary Shelley’s journal noted that, a Frenchwoman reminded them of the danger of rape by Napoleon’s recently disbanded armies, because these soldiers and officers wandered idly about the country and assaulted the locals.⁶⁵ According to

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 148-9; pp. 156-7.

⁶⁵ Mary Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks’ Tour*, p. 19.

Eaton, the British army, on the contrary, was different:

The British ... protected the wounded French from the rage of the Prussians, who would have gladly avenged the cruelties with which they had been treated by them. Our wounded soldiers, who were able to move, employed themselves in assisting their suffering enemies, binding up their wounds, and giving them food and water.⁶⁶

The British army neither plundered towns nor ruined houses during their march through France. Thus, Eaton proudly wrote for her British readers that ‘there is not a country of the civilized world where England is not mentioned with respect and gratitude, and the very name of Englishman coupled with blessings’.⁶⁷ Whether her account was exaggerated or not, it reflected popular national sentiment of the age. As Cottrell indicates, ‘every British characteristic was given priority over every French characteristic’ during the Napoleonic wars.⁶⁸ Britons were proud of their distinctiveness and superiority, and of having lived in true liberty and independence during the Napoleonic period. Not surprisingly, her work was received very well and, according to Jane Robinson, rapidly ran through ten editions.⁶⁹

As Eaton put it, Napoleon now fell from ‘the highest imperial throne of the universe’ to ‘the lowest abyss of fortune’.⁷⁰ British troops were in Paris, and the Bourbon monarchy was again restored. She proudly proclaimed that, ‘all this was the

⁶⁶ Englishwoman, *The Days of Battle*, p. 149.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁶⁸ Cottrell, ‘The Devil on Two Sticks: Franco-phobia in 1803’, p. 269.

⁶⁹ See Jane Robinson, *Wayward Women: a Guide to Women Travellers* (Oxford, 1990), p. 262.

⁷⁰ Englishwoman, *The Days of Battle*, p. 165.

work of England!’⁷¹ In her view, what Britain had gained for years of war was glory: Britain had achieved ‘security, peace and prosperity for the world’, and ‘the highest place among nations’ for herself.⁷² This glory was, like that of Greece and of Rome, the highest, ‘immortal’ and ‘indestructible’.⁷³ Eaton wished wholeheartedly that their offspring would pride themselves on being the descendants of those who fought and conquered ‘in the righteous cause of Justice, Honour, and Independence’, on the territories of Spain and Brussels, and would feel full enthusiasm for the ‘virtuous patriotism’ when they retraced the history of their country’s achievements.⁷⁴ Such was the sentiment deeply impressed on her mind. The British were once again described as the only people who was able to fight against Napoleon. As Semmel indicates, ‘There was great narrative satisfaction to be found in reading the Napoleonic wars as a story of single combat between Napoleon and Britain’.⁷⁵ For those patriotic writers, the British not only revealed their super power in defeating the military tyranny of Napoleon, but showed their moral superiority in defending the liberty, morality and civilization of Europe. With the highest gratification in being a subject of such a great nation, Eaton returned home six weeks later with more pride than ever in being an Englishwoman.⁷⁶

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁷⁵ Semmel, *Napoleon*, p. 4.

⁷⁶ Englishwoman, *The Days of Battle*, p. 168.

Through the Peninsular War and battle of Waterloo, Arthur Wellesley (1769-1852), 1st Duke of Wellington, turned out to be the British hero in this turbulent age. He represented British manly chivalric virtue and became a new focus for British women travellers in 1814 and 1815. On the night of 7 May 1814, while Carter was sitting at the Opéra, she saw Wellington was there, having by this time already won several great battles in the Peninsular War and the south of France. On seeing Wellington, Carter felt proud to be an Englishwoman.⁷⁷ Frances Shelley and her husband were life-long friends of the Duke of Wellington, and her diary of 1815 included a close description of him. According to her, after Europe was restored to 'liberty' in June 1815, they embarked on their journey hoping to 'be the first to see, and congratulate, the hero [the Duke of Wellington]'.⁷⁸ Wellington had been regarded by British people with the deepest gratitude for he had, as Frances Shelley stressed, 'relieved Englishmen from a state of deep despondency, and had placed his reputation as a merciful conqueror on a plane with his heroes of chivalry in all ages'.⁷⁹ She felt delight that she had conversed with him as a friend several times during their stay in Paris. Wellington aroused her pride in being an Englishwoman, and at being born in the same age as this great hero.⁸⁰

The fall of Napoleon and the victory of Wellington were therefore represented as

⁷⁷ *Letters from a Lady*, pp. 97-8.

⁷⁸ Shelley, *The Diary*, p. 87.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

the triumph of good over evil. As McCunn has indicated, in the later stages of Napoleon's career, 'we feel the want of a more sympathetic attitude towards the enemy' in Britain.⁸¹ Napoleon's character was thus stereotyped as the enemy of civilization, liberty and moral values. The triumph of Waterloo, for most Britons, was a glorious victory for Great Britain. Most of the writings of 1814 and 1815 shared this patriotic impulse that Britain was the defender of the liberty of Europe, and shared the collective consciousness of their superiority during the war against the tyrant Napoleon Bonaparte.

British women travellers' writings shared their national prejudice. As I have shown in Chapter 8 and in this chapter, most British female travellers wrote that, during their European travels in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Empire, the British were everywhere welcomed and were respected. Yet if we look at many European nations' attitudes during this era, anti-British feelings were common.⁸² During the Napoleonic wars, indeed, Bonaparte's unrestrained military aggression was detested by all European nations, yet Britain appeared to be a dangerous aggressor on the sea and in commercial trade as well.⁸³ Throughout the 1800s and 1810s, as A. D. Harvey emphasizes, many records written by British commanders, British diplomats and

⁸¹ McCunn, *English View*, p. 137.

⁸² The victory of Waterloo was a dramatic turning point that helped European nations to change their attitude towards the British people.

⁸³ See, for example, A. D. Harvey, 'European attitudes to Britain during the French revolutionary and Napoleonic era', *History*, 63(1978), 356-65; Brendan Simms, 'Britain and Napoleon', in *Napoleon and Europe*, ed. Philip G. Dwyer (Harlow, 2001), pp. 192-201.

European travellers revealed that there were grumbles about Britain, and even that the British were everywhere detested.⁸⁴ Napoleon's Berlin Decrees of November 1806 determined to cripple the British economy, which action stirred up strong responses from Britain and reinforced British unity in the struggle against this dangerous enemy. The Decrees did not destroy the British because of their flourishing trade with non-European world. Instead, it reduced the trade of France and French-occupied Europe owing to the British total blockade of the ports of France and her allies. Thus, the British government stimulated bitter responses from the European nations. Although the British were proud of helping the Spaniards to expel the French from 1808 onwards, pointed out by Harvey, some British officers still reported that the Spaniards would rather see the French than the British.⁸⁵ While Wellington was appointed general by the Spanish government in 1812, Ballesteros, captain-general of Andalusia, revolted, and his supporters proclaimed that Britain was 'as great a threat to Spain as France'.⁸⁶ Furthermore, these British writers proudly claimed that Britain was the only country that stood alone and helped other countries to fight against Bonaparte. Actually, however, the Russians, the Austrians and the Prussians contributed hugely to the defeat of Napoleon's armies. Speaking of the Waterloo campaign, as Peter Hofschröer argues, Wellington was not a flawless hero as the

⁸⁴ Harvey, 'European Attitudes to Britain during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Era', 356-7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 357.

⁸⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 357.

British had described him, and, according to him, the Prussian armies played a more important role than the British.⁸⁷

Travellers' observations did not necessarily reflect the actual situation, of course. Instead, they represented what travellers chose to believe, how they interpreted the events with their biases and what they wanted their readers to believe. Benedict Anderson, therefore, claims in his well-known work, *Imagined Communities*, that nationalism is created by 'cultural artefacts of a particular kind', and that such artefacts were created from the end of the eighteenth century through 'the spontaneous distillation' of a complex historical force.⁸⁸ The nation, according to Anderson, is 'imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible'.⁸⁹ It is this kind of strong, common and sometimes false consciousness that forged an imagined nation. In addition, the rapid growth of printed products in the eighteenth century encouraged the dramatic emergence of national consciousness. Anderson maintains that, the expansion of 'print-capitalism' made it possible for 'rapidly growing numbers of people to think about themselves, and to relate themselves to

⁸⁷ See Peter Hofschröder, *1815: The Waterloo Campaign: Wellington, His German Allies and the Battles of Ligny and Quatre Bras* (London, 1998), and Peter Hofschröder, *1815: the Waterloo Campaign: the German Victory: from Waterloo to the Fall of Napoleon* (London, 2004).

⁸⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), p. 4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

others, in profoundly new ways'.⁹⁰ Thus, travel writing, one of the most popular forms of literature in this period, as Katherine Turner has stressed, 'played a central role in developing formations of national identity and comparative constitutional awareness',⁹¹ because it responded to propaganda and to the war against Napoleon, revealed the heightened British national consciousness during the war against France, and, therefore, promoted the establishment of what Anderson calls 'imagined communities'.

Moreover, as the French writer Ernest Renan puts it, 'the essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things'. Facing a hostile 'other', the subjects of a nation forge their common memories and common enemy.⁹² While a great man and a degree of historical glory were absolutely necessary to forge British national consciousness in the Napoleonic age, suffering together at this time in opposition to their hostile 'other' helped to unify the British people more than ever before. This, therefore, supported what Renan has argued, 'suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are of more value than triumphs, for they impose duties, and

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 36. For a general introduction to print culture in eighteenth-century Britain, see John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago, 2000), ch. 3, 'Authors, Publishers and the Making of Literary Culture', pp. 125-160, and ch. 4, 'Readers and the Reading Public', pp. 167-200.

⁹¹ Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe 1750-1800: Authorship, Gender, and National Identity* (Aldershot, 2001), p. 10.

⁹² Ernest Renan, 'What is a nation?', trans. Martin Thom, in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London, 1990), p. 11.

require a common effort.’⁹³ Out of a strong fear of invasion, Napoleon was fabricated as an immoral demonic force who had attacked all Europe. Most Britons, even those who used to call for reform to complete liberty and equality, now regarded their British political system as the best way to protect the people’s stability, liberty and property.

C. Other Voices: Anti-Nationalism

The majority of British visitors to France in 1814 and 1815 assured their readers of the superiority of Great Britain, whose constitution had protected liberty for ages, and claimed that only the British people were fit for liberty, in contrast to the oppressive, insincere, and immoral French nation. None the less, some British women who had remained in France after 1802 did not represent France and Napoleonic Europe as a tyrannical entity. They of course missed their home country and wished to correspond with their family. Their natural patriotic feelings were awakened while staying in a foreign country, but they did not perceive the ‘other’ with a hostile and superior attitude. Two such were Catherine Davies and Frances Burney.⁹⁴

Catherine Davies was governess to the Murat family in Paris and Naples from

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 19. Hans Kohn also wrote, ‘Periods of oppression or danger from the outside may arouse in the masses a feeling of nationalism ... As a rule, wars before the French Revolution did not arouse a deep national sentiment’, in Hans Kohn, ‘The Nature of Nationalism’, *The American Political Science Review*, 33 (1939), 1014.

⁹⁴ Martha and Mary Russell’s father, William Russell, was another cosmopolitan Briton, who lived in France in 1800s. He admired Napoleon and applied for French citizenship.

1803 to 1814.⁹⁵ She was a conservative, pacifist and also a cosmopolitan British woman. During these years, Davies and another English companion were received with great kindness by the Murat family. Although the servants, both French and Italian, were prejudiced against them because they regarded the British as their enemy, Madame Murat had never doubted Davies' fidelity and had been satisfied with her performance as a governess.⁹⁶ After Napoleon crowned himself emperor, he talked to Davies once in the palace of Fontainebleau. The emperor said to her, 'You English are not good.' She replied, 'Sire, There are some of the English good, and some bad, as well as the French'. 'Do you', he asked, 'like the French as well as the English?' 'Sire', she replied, 'If I were to say I like the French as well as the English, I should think myself a hypocrite; but I like those of all nations who are kind to me'.⁹⁷ This was basically Davies' attitude during the Napoleonic period. She was a patriot, but not a narrow one. Yet Davies criticized Napoleon's ambition, which forced Europe to arm against him. In addition, her assessment of Madame Murat and Napoleon was not

⁹⁵ Davies followed an English family to France in 1802 as a governess. The English family returned home when tensions grew between France and Great Britain. Davies was introduced to the family of Caroline Bonaparte (1782-1839), Madame Murat, the second sister of Bonaparte, who was looking for an Englishwoman to take care of her three children, one four year-old boy, one two year-old girl and a little baby boy. Davies accepted this job, and then war was declared again, so she was detained in France with the Murat family. When Bonaparte intended to invade Britain, he wanted to deport these two British women, but the Murat family managed to evade this order and kept them within the Murat household. In 1808 General Murat (1767-1815) was created king of Naples by Bonaparte and the family moved to Italy, including Davies. See Catherine Davies, *Eleven Years' Residence in the Family of Murat, King of Naples* (London, 1841), pp. 2-5. Caroline married Joachim-Napoléon Murat in 1800. They had four children: Achille Charles Louis Napoléon Murat (1801-1847), Marie Letizia Josephine Annonciade Murat (1802-1859), Lucien Charles Joseph Napoléon Murat (1803-1878), and Louise Julie Caroline Murat (1805-1889).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

negative. Madame Murat, like her brother, possessed a 'strong mind' and 'great penetration', and was fond of 'maneuvering'.⁹⁸ Unlike those British who lived in Britain under the nightmares of the French invasion for decades and thus revealed their extreme hostility to and contempt for Napoleon during their visit to Paris after the fall of Napoleon, Davies was not influenced by the British propaganda and did not live under this kind of imaginative fear. As Watson has maintained, these images of the savage French and of tyrannical and demonic Napoleon were 'only effective when experienced at a distance'.⁹⁹ Thus, penned by Davies, Napoleon was an ambitious and aggressive emperor, but not an evil demon. Eventually, the situation of the kingdom of Naples became bad after 1812 and she and the royal children were ordered to leave in 1814.

Frances Burney was another anti-nationalist. She voiced her doubts about the rightness of Britain's liberal self-image and of nationalism during the war against France. The d'Arblays stayed in France from 1802 to 1812, and again returned to Paris in November 1814.¹⁰⁰ In March 1815, the news of Napoleon's return was spread and Paris was full of fear and dread of war. She still remembered the joyful

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁹⁹ Watson, 'Bonfires, Bells and Bayonets', p. 107.

¹⁰⁰ In 1814, with the entrance of the Allies into Paris and the return of the Bourbons to the throne, royalists like M. d'Arblay, who had refused military service under Bonaparte, could now expect rewards. In May M. d'Arblay received a summons from the Duc de Luxembourg to enter *la Garde du Corps de son Roi*. On May 27 M. d'Arblay, having received official notice of his military appointment in *la Garde du Corps*, returned promptly to France. M. d'Arblay returned to England briefly in October and took his family to Paris again in November 1814. See Joyce Hemlow, *The History of Fanny Burney* (Oxford, 1958), pp. 350-5.

city she had witnessed during the Peace of Amiens, but everything was different due to the fear of a renewed war:

The street was empty; the gay, constant gala of a Parisian Sunday was changed into fearful solitude: no sound was heard, but that if here and there some hurried footstep, on one hand hastening for a passport to secure safety by flight; on the other, rushing abruptly from or to some concealment, to devise means of accelerating and hailing the entrance of the Conqueror.¹⁰¹

People despaired when they were told in March 1815 that there was no force to resist Napoleon. While M. d'Arblay was serving in the army in order to save his king, Burney was forced to flee to Brussels with Princess d'Hénin, because, as wife of a royal officer, she was in great danger staying in Paris. After a frightful journey during a dark night, in fear of pursuit and captivity, she finally left 'the tortured, wretched, revolutionary France', and entered Belgium, a place of tranquility.¹⁰² The tranquility did not last long, however. She experienced distress, disturbance and fear on the eve of the battle of Waterloo. In June and early July, her letters are full of her descriptions of the aftermath of war: even a novelist's pen could not describe the shocking and afflicting effects of the continuous sight of 'maimed, wounded, mutilated & tortured victims of this exterminating warfare'.¹⁰³

The horror finally passed, and Burney was delighted by the victory of Wellington, because he restored peace to Europe. As an Englishwoman, she certainly

¹⁰¹ Frances Burney, *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, ed. Charlotte Barrett (7 vols., London, 1854), vii, p. 65.

¹⁰² Frances Burney to Mrs. Broome, Brussels, 27 March 1815, in *Journals and Letters*, viii, p. 92.

¹⁰³ Frances Burney to M. d'Arblay, Brussels, 15-19 June 1815, *ibid.*, p. 215.

felt proud of this British victory, and considered the date '18 June 1815' as the greatest 'in the annals of Great Britain!'¹⁰⁴ Most of her delight was derived from her pacifism. Like many other British, she disagreed with Napoleon's despotism. She wrote to her friend, who was an admirer of Napoleon, about her life under the despotic emperor. In her letter she wrote that: 'Corporal Liberty could only be preserved by Mental forbearance – i.e. subjection'.¹⁰⁵ In the past ten years, she had been happy personally, but she was not contented with life in 'the safety of deliberate prudence, or of retiring timidity'.¹⁰⁶ For her, this kind of life 'satisfies indeed No *mind*'; it 'merely suffices for *bodily* security'.¹⁰⁷ Yet, her dislike of Napoleon was unlike the national prejudice expressed by Charlotte Eaton and Anne Carter. The popular anti-Gallican tone that the good British had triumphed over the corrupt and vicious French, the tone which pervaded the writings of Eaton and Carter, did not appear in Burney's writings.

Burney travelled through France and Germany after the war. Frances Burney condemned not only the cruelty of the Revolution and of Napoleon, but also that of the royalists. During her journey through Bonn to Coblenz, she met a French *ci-devant* couple, who had lost their sons while forced into fighting for Napoleon whom they detested. During their emigration, they lost all their property. Moreover,

¹⁰⁴ Burney, *Diary*, vii, p. 126.

¹⁰⁵ Frances Burney to Mrs. Waddington, 3 July 1815, in *Journals and Letters*, viii, p. 283.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 282.

they had been treated with equal brutality ‘by the Revolutionists because they were suspected of loyalty, and by the Royalists because their children had served in the armies of the Revolutionists’.¹⁰⁸ Poor people suffered greatly from the changeable political situation and from the ruthless attitude shown by each side towards the opposition. Burney had disagreed with heightened national sentiment and the harsh treatment of ‘others’ during the war. This sentiment was revealed fully in her last novel, *The Wanderer*.

While most Britons in the Napoleonic age convinced themselves that they were the only people capable of respecting liberty, Frances Burney’s *The Wanderer* challenged the British sense of superiority and distinctiveness.¹⁰⁹ The story, set in the era of the Terror, was about the adventures of an Englishwoman, Juliet, who journeyed to England from France in order to seek refuge. She disguised herself: her name, her origin and her face, to escape from the Jacobins. On her arrival in England, lacking a name, a country, a family, a friend, and money, being regarded as a Catholic maid, she received no respect and protection from the British. Removing all these names and status, she received no respect at all. Thus, while the French did not

¹⁰⁸ Burney, *Diary*, p. 174.

¹⁰⁹ Frances Burney’s *The Wanderer* also discussed women’s independence, equality and dignity in eighteenth-century Britain. See, for example, Margaret Anne Doody, *Frances Burney: the Life in the Works* (Cambridge, 1988), ch. 9, ‘*The Wanderer; or, Female Difficulties*: Revolution, the Rights of Woman, and “The Wild Edifice”’, pp. 313-68; Rose Marie Cutting, ‘Defiant Women: The Growth of Feminism in Fanny Burney’s Novels’, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 17 (1977), 519-30; Debra Silverman, ‘Reading Frances Burney’s “The Wanderer; Or, Female Difficulties”: The Politics of Women’s Independence’, *Pacific Coast Philology*, 26(1991), 68-77.

understand the true meaning of liberty during the Terror, nor did the British really respect liberty or offer Christian charity to this poor woman. Although she revealed her true identity as an educated patriotic Protestant Englishwoman by the fourth chapter, her family did not acknowledge the legitimacy of her birth. She had hoped for much before entering her father's country, which should promise liberty to all her subjects. Yet she eventually felt like a 'helpless foreigner' wandering in her native land.¹¹⁰ Burney would pose the question in this novel, therefore, whether women felt safer and freer in Britain than in France.

Burney began this novel in the late 1790s and developed it during her stay in France between 1802 and 1812. As Margaret Anne Doody maintains, had this work been published in the 1790s, during which period there had been a debate on the respective liberties of Britain and France, it would surely have been better received by at least some of the British public.¹¹¹ By the time *The Wanderer* was published, however, what chiefly interested the British public was to celebrate the defeat of the 'Corsican tyrant', to criticize the evils of the French nation and to affirm their British superior moral virtue and true liberty.¹¹² Most readers just hoped to go back to their peaceful life, and were tired of the cries for change and reform. Thus, Frances Burney's new work seemed to have disappointed her readers. Doody points out that

¹¹⁰ Frances Burney, *The Wanderer, or, Female Difficulties* (1814), ed. Margaret Anne Doody, Robert L. Mack and Peter Sabor (Oxford, 1991), p. 214.

¹¹¹ Doody, *Frances Burney*, p. 332.

¹¹² See *ibid.*, pp. 332-3.

Burney's contemporary reviewers such as John Wilson Croker of the *Quarterly Review* criticized the work severely, because Burney, as an Englishwoman and a writer, neglected to condemn Napoleon Bonaparte and debased herself to make herself acceptable to the French authorities.¹¹³ Croker believed that such sufferings as Juliet had gone through could *never* happen in Britain.

Frances Burney was known as a friend and supporter of Edmund Burke. Burke had argued that the traditions of the British constitution had brought her people security for ages, and Britain was the 'true supporter of all liberal and manly morals'.¹¹⁴ Burke's opinions were accepted by the majority of British people, and developed into a national sentiment throughout the Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Whilst lamenting Marie Antoinette's sad fate, they assured themselves that they had protected their own women properly. Nevertheless, Burney's depiction of female sufferings questioned all these preconceived ideas. She challenged the manly, liberal and Protestant identity of Britishness that had been forged during the war, as we have seen in Eaton's writing that British army protected not only Britons, but also treated 'the wounded French' in civil manner,¹¹⁵ and that the British were the only people lived in true liberty and independence. Living in France for a decade among her French friends, it seems that she did not judge French society with British superiority.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 333-4.

¹¹⁴ Burke, *Reflections*, p. 31, 86.

¹¹⁵ Englishwoman, *The Days of Battle*, p. 149,

In her novels, diaries and 1793 pamphlet on the émigré French clergy, she did not take any national identity and political ideology for granted. Though Burney agreed with Burke's *Reflections*, she refused to write for the *Anti-Jacobin* during the 1790s;¹¹⁶ despite sharing certain Enlightenment values like Godwin and Wollstonecraft, she did not offer any specific solution for social problems. Instead, as Doody maintains, Burney 'makes the reader begin to question certain norms and practices',¹¹⁷ and she dared to reveal that, 'in the present constitution of things, cruelty rather than compassion guides actual social responses'.¹¹⁸ While British society was praised by the conservatives as in possession of true liberty and moral virtue, in the view of Burney, her country ignored the issues raised through the French Revolution, and operated a system of oppression and control as well.¹¹⁹

Throughout her wanderings, Juliet was insulted by all the British people she met. The only man who was kind to her and cared about her was a Roman Catholic bishop. The bishop took care of her when she was in France and for her he was like a father and 'first, best, and nearly only friend'.¹²⁰ While she was questioned for her faith by her (Protestant) family, the bishop had never violated her Protestant faith or tried to

¹¹⁶ Frances Burney to Charles Burney, 15 January 1798, in *Journals and Letters*, iv, pp. 64-6. According to this letter, Mrs. Crewe had requested Charles Burney to ask Frances Burney to contribute to the *Anti-Jacobin*.

¹¹⁷ Margaret Anne Doody, 'Burney and Politics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney*, ed. Peter Sabor (Cambridge, 2007), p. 98.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹¹⁹ See *ibid.*, pp. 98-99, 109-110.

¹²⁰ Burney, *The Wanderer*, p. 615.

convert her. Burney had always spoken out for religious tolerance. While she was a devout Protestant, she did not actively promote her religion. As she wrote as early as 1793, 'We are too apt to consider ourselves rather as a distinct race of beings, than as merely the emulous inhabitants of rival states'.¹²¹ National and religious distinctiveness were but ridiculously arbitrary distinctions, because both the British and the French were 'all the creatures of one Creator'.¹²² As was pointed out in Chapter 8, Burney shared with Edmund Burke the same religious tolerance. They both thought that, despite there being different national churches, there was but one God, and Christianity at large was their common faith. Thus, in the novel, Juliet told Lord Denmeath that, 'I am firmly a Protestant! But, as such, I am a Christian; so, and most piously, yet not illiberally, is the Bishop.'¹²³

Whilst nearly all the British female travel writers depicted the French as immoral and French society as oppressive and vain, for Burney, the British themselves repeated the same mistakes. Burney's post-revolutionary Britain therefore was contrary to prevailing national ideologies. Many British writers, like the Lake poets, were disillusioned by the reality of the Revolution and found solace in English rural society and in Burkean moral values: religion, tradition, and the cherished social order, constitution and liberty. Yet, Burney looked at British national awareness

¹²¹ Frances Burney, *Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy* (London, 1793), p. 12.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹²³ Burney, *The Wanderer*, pp. 615-16.

during the war against France from a more controversial perspective. As Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke point out, Burney found that there was no solace for a female wanderer, whether in high society or in the countryside.¹²⁴ The British people's hostile attitude towards 'others' only diminished the liberal spirit of which they had been proud. Irritated by Burney's *The Wanderer*, the radical William Hazlitt, who had retained his liberal and reforming ideals during the Napoleonic wars, mocked this Juliet and asserted that the 'Female Difficulties are difficulties created out of nothing.'¹²⁵ Yet Hazlitt's account was exactly what Burney intended to laugh at.

The age of the French Revolution was over. Yet despite her unfavorable observations of Napoleonic France in 1814, Mary Shelley still held dear the ideals of the Revolution.¹²⁶ The Shelleys returned to Europe again in 1816. As the child of the most revolutionary British figures of the 1790s, Shelley offered her verdict on the Revolution from 1789 to 1815 in *Frankenstein*.¹²⁷ Of course, there are many themes to talk about in this great work, but one of them must be political. Victor

¹²⁴ See Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke, 'British Women Writers and the French Revolution, 1789-1815', in *Rebellious Hearts*, p. 14.

¹²⁵ Quote in Jerinic, 'Challenging Englishness', p. 66.

¹²⁶ Some research suggests that Mary Shelley had rejected radicalism by the time she wrote *Frankenstein*. See Lee Sterrenburg, 'Mary Shelley's Monster: Politics and Psyche in *Frankenstein*', in *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's Novel*, ed. George Levine and U. C. Knoepfelmacher (Berkeley, 1979), pp. 143-71.

¹²⁷ The following account of *Frankenstein* is indebted to Anne K. Mellor, *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (London, 1988), esp. ch. 4, 'Promethean Politics', pp. 70-88, and Clemit, 'Frankenstein', pp. 26-37.

Frankenstein's initial ideal was good and was derived from normal human aspirations: to make a living being from dead bodies in order to conquer the fear of death. But, when the newborn creature turned out to be an ugly eight-foot giant, he fled and refused to nurture it. The creature gained no sympathy from human society and, eventually, it was driven to become an uncontrollable, violent and ruthless murderer. Frankenstein's creature shared the same fate as the Revolution. They were both originally benevolent and good, but without proper nurture, misery made them violent monsters.¹²⁸ Thus, the ground-breaking efforts to create a 'new man' – and a new government - proved dangerous and ultimately disastrous. According to Mellor's study of politics in *Frankenstein*, Shelley implied that the Revolution was initially designed for human perfectibility by philosophers and 'the Girondins'.¹²⁹ Once it broke out, however, the revolutionaries failed to communicate with the aristocrats and the clergy, to teach people the meaning of liberty and equality, and to deal with their fears, uncertainties and passions. Thus the Revolution, without guidance and control, developed into a political monster, which was identified in the writings of Edmund Burke and Abbé Barruel, with the leadership of 'the Montagnards'.¹³⁰ However, in my view, Shelley criticized revolutionaries, of whatever group, who, like Frankenstein,

¹²⁸ The creature cried out throughout the novel: 'I was benevolent and good, misery made me a fiend', Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 100.

¹²⁹ Mellor, *Mary Shelley*, p. 82

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 82; see also Anne K. Mellor, 'English Women Writers and the French Revolution', in *Rebel Daughters: Women and the French Revolution*, ed. Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine (Oxford, 1992), pp. 268-9.

deliberately changed the pace of historical change in a premature historical environment, though such trying might not be an unworthy ideal. Shelley's writings suggest that the Terror had come and gone, yet politicians still followed the old disastrous road. Napoleon Bonaparte again exploited the name of liberty to fulfil his personal ambition, and tyranny and violence again caused mass destruction. In the end, as Shelley witnessed on the Continent in 1814, people's moral values were destroyed as well.

As I have indicated, Mary Shelley's vision of humanity was far from optimistic. She did not trust abstract goodness, unless it was combined with pragmatic methods. Yet, in her proclaimed sympathy for the creature of Frankenstein: 'Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me?' cried out the creature, Shelley showed her compassion for the fate of the Revolution.¹³¹ Having learned of Wollstonecraft's direct experience during the French Revolution and equally having cherished Godwin's political theories, Shelley reviewed the age of Revolution again and integrated what she had learned from her direct experience of the aftermath of the Revolution with the great political thoughts of her age: those of Wollstonecraft, Godwin, the first- and second-generation Romantic writers, and Burke. She thus argued that any benevolent aspiration must develop in a tolerant environment with

¹³¹ Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p. 221.

proper guidance and restraint. This conclusion was closely allied to Wollstonecraft's political opinions and Godwin's gradualism after the late 1790s.¹³² At the same time, Mary Shelley maintained her allegiance to the Revolutionary ideals. As she wrote in Geneva, the birthplace of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in 1816, she praised this Revolution, 'which [Rousseau's] writings mainly contributed to mature, and which, notwithstanding the temporary bloodshed and injustice with which it was polluted, has produced enduring benefits to mankind, which not all the chicanery of statesmen, nor even the greatest conspiracy of kings, can entirely render vain'.¹³³

¹³² See Clemit, 'Frankenstein', pp. 26-44.

¹³³ Mary Shelley, *History of a Six Weeks' Tour*, p. 46.

CONCLUSION

Alexander Pope wrote in 1735 at the beginning of his *An Epistle to a Lady*: ‘Nothing so true as what you once let fall / “Most Women have no Characters at all”’. While men were visible in the public sphere, ‘A Woman’s seen in Private life alone’.¹ Yet this was not so in reality in the eighteenth century, at least not in the late eighteenth century as I have shown in this thesis. In this thesis I have drawn attention to a number of women who displayed courage in pursuing their liberty and self-improvement despite the frustrations they met on the way. They had tried to prove that a woman’s fortune would not solely be dictated by their sex. They were reluctant to be designated as submissive and meek wives, fated to stay at home. They did not want to be ‘Penelopes’ any more; they wanted to be female ‘Odysseuses’.² They affirmed their own power over their sex and the power of reason by their actions of travelling and writing. Wollstonecraft thus asserted that ‘For man and woman, truth, if I understand the meaning of the word, must be the same’.³

Moreover, as this thesis has argued, female travel literature proved its claim to be taken seriously in British political culture during the revolutionary age, because many women themselves contributed to contemporary political thought and

¹ Alexander Pope, *An Epistle to a Lady*, Dublin, 1735, *Eighteenth Century Collection Online*. Gale Group <<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO>>, p. 1, 10.

² Karen Lawrence writes: ‘it is a Western cultural truism that Penelope [women] waits while Odysseus [men] voyages’. Karen Lawrence, *Penelope Voyages: Women and Travel in the British Literary Traditions* (New York, 1994), p. ix.

³ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: an Authoritative Text Backgrounds and Contexts Criticism*, ed. Deidre Shauna Lynch (3rd edn., New York and London, 2009), p. 55.

arguments, especially on the subject of the 'Revolution controversy' which became so heated in the early 1790s. In addition, the political opinions that they developed during their travels also shed light on the formation of British national consciousness during this period. We have discovered that in the area of female political opinion, women usually used men's political terms and ways of argument to illustrate their ideas. Instead of rejecting male elite political culture, women shared in it with men. If these women's opinions mirrored the mainstream development of national identity of the age, it did not mean that women imitated the ideas of men, but rather they shared similar national sentiment and political opinions with men for they faced the same conflicts and anxiety during the revolutionary and Napoleonic era.

Looking at the writings of eighteenth-century British educated women, therefore, there can be no doubt, as Anne K. Mellor has argued in the *Mothers of the Nation*, that plenty of women did participate in the formation of public opinion.⁴ Here we have the answer to the question I posed at the beginning of the 'Introduction'. If we explain the past according to the concept of separate sexual spheres it would simplify a complex and flexible history. Moreover, while separate sexual spheres were being increasingly prescribed as the desirable social norm in the second half of the eighteenth century, these female writers suggested a society without such distinctions.

⁴ Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington, 2000), p. 7.

As the first two chapters have stressed, while travelling these women trained their rational minds in reasoning, observing and practising introspection. As female literacy generally increased due to improvements in education, growing numbers of women became aware of the unequal situation of the two sexes, and some began to challenge the social conventions that were imposed on women. Travel accounts record women's rethinking of their individual identity and their cultural identity in foreign lands. As my thesis has shown, some women, like Lady Holland and Mary Berry, wrote about their experiences of changing from 'Penelopes' to female 'Odysseuses' in their travel writings, an intellectual process which was sometimes not easy for them. They re-thought their role while wandering in foreign lands; they questioned their beliefs, their situation at home and in society, and their future.

Wollstonecraft is one of the most important figures throughout this thesis. Throughout her life she spoke out against social conventions, asserted the claim of all human beings to have natural rights, and encouraged the female sex, including herself, to take power over their own lives. The Bastille fell in July 1789 and the revolutionaries cried out the ideas of liberty and equality. Such revolutionary optimism expressed Wollstonecraft's ideal of future perfectibility. But when she came to Paris three years later, she realized that social reality did not necessarily follow abstract theories. Human society was more complicated than she had expected, and

radical political change turned out not to be the best way to achieve social reform. Her own life did not follow her rational theories either. As we have seen, according to the private letters composed during her journeys in France and in Northern Europe, she sometimes was not as strong as she expected the female sex to be in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Despite this, as the thesis has pointed out, politically, Wollstonecraft adjusted her theories and endeavoured to advance ideas concerning the progress of human society and civilization, and, personally, she revealed her heroism in being a rational and capable woman in the world.

Like Wollstonecraft, travel offered other educated women a way to live with more freedom of mind and of movement. As described in Chapter 2, they either wanted to be ‘masculine’ women or wished to reform the content of femininity. They resisted accepting traditional female characteristics and being passive. Further, during wartime many women travellers became politically conservative. They inclined towards an acceptance of women’s natural and proper role in domesticity and subordination to their husbands. Nevertheless, some of them continued travelling abroad when the international situation permitted them to do so, instead of confining themselves at home. They also picked up their pens to write (which had been claimed as a ‘masculine’ activity in eighteenth-century conservative conduct books) their observations on continental society. This included their opinions about politics, the

Revolution and war (which, again according to conservative conduct manuals, were subjects identified as belonging to the male sphere). In some ways, these conservative women also played a role in public, and contributed to the political debates of their day. Both conservative and liberal women wanted to make decisions for themselves and to assert their power in certain areas. Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 therefore conclude with the observation that female travel writing enlarged the cultural identification of femininity and revealed an alternative way of thinking about women's place in society in the revolutionary and Napoleonic age.

Part Two of my thesis has demonstrated women travellers' contributions to the political conflict caused by the French Revolution. Burke and Wollstonecraft both wrote works in order to respond to the political controversy stimulated by the Revolution. They both regarded the ideal of democracy as a basic theoretical stimulus of the Revolution, but their perception of these great events led them to opposed conclusions. Their writings were among the first to launch the print debate on the 'Revolution controversy' in the early 1790s, and their works were used as principal resources in this debate. As my thesis has shown, 'the Revolution controversy' was not only a favourite topic among the important political philosophers of the day, such as Thomas Paine, Joseph Priestley, James Mackintosh, and William Godwin, but also an inescapable subject in the travel writings composed by those who visited Europe

during the revolutionary age.

As this thesis has argued, the experience of history in the making may have helped British female radicals to renegotiate their preconceived political opinions. Witnessing Europe in the age of the Revolution, some of them went through the chaos of the Terror. They suffered from the death of their Girondist friends and were even arrested as prisoners; some saw the sad effects of the wars, and others were disappointed with the recent development of France and the continuous wars that followed. These female political dissenters, such as Wollstonecraft, Ann Radcliffe, Helen Maria Williams, the Russell sister and Mary Shelley, came to think that British radicals' belief in the early 1790s in the rational minds of men and in the establishment of a new government had been naïve. Despite this, these women were unwilling to abandon their support for the principles of the Revolution. As political dissenters they still supported revolutionary ideals, but thought these ideals should be nurtured naturally and not put into effect by violent means in the existing society. Burke's *Reflections* may have had some influence over these women's political thinking. Instead of stressing abstract freedoms, they turned to emphasize ways of improving the morality of the people and increasing their civic virtue. Nevertheless, they did not make a complete intellectual about-turn like James Mackintosh, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Anna Seward, all of whom initially

supported the Revolution but later turned to recognize the benefits provided by the existing British constitution and to regard the British government as the most efficient way of protecting the people's interests and general happiness. These women did not regard the British government as the best political system, nor did they agree with Burke's words that terror was the last terminus of the Revolution. They still believed that the ideals of the Revolution, based on the principles of liberty and equality, would finally benefit humankind and be treasured by everyone.

Furthermore, there was a widely launched loyalist association movement in Britain influenced by Burke's *Reflections*. Burke's work persuaded many Britons that any change must fit in with a nation's organic history; otherwise, the whole fabric of the nation would dissolve. The recent violent development of the Revolution in France had apparently proved Burke's prediction correct, and the traditional system in Britain had turned out to be the most efficient way to protect the people's interests and general happiness. If the execution of the 'beautiful' queen made most women travellers affirm again that the revolutionaries had lost their humanity, the war between France and Britain in 1793 speeded the general embrace of the British constitution. In the eyes of most British female travellers, even those who had believed in revolutionary ideals, the French revolutionaries, therefore, not only failed to bring liberty and peace to France as they had promised, but endangered the stability

of Europe. Hence, as the thesis has indicated, Dorothy Wordsworth's journal in 1798 revealed that, in her view, there were too many uncertainties in humans' rational minds, in historical progress and in political reform, and that man should not seek to re-build the world according to his will. Dorothy, like William Wordsworth, therefore, accepted Burke's idea of the traditional nature of society, emphasizing habitual feelings and lives, and appealing to moral sense.

With the general acceptance of Burke's conservatism once the war against France began, as Part Three has shown, national awareness and patriotism became an important mental dimension in women travellers' accounts. The term 'patriotic' turned from describing the radical's characteristic of defending his/her country's freedom against the existing order to emphasizing the conservatives' loyalty to the establishment during the war against France. During this age, the radicals' sympathy with the revolutionary cause was depicted by the conservatives as tantamount to offering support to a foreign enemy. Thus, by the turn of the century, most British women travellers, including even some radically-inclined women, ended their travel journals with a declaration of their love for Britain.

Under the threat from Napoleon Bonaparte, a period of extreme francophobia ensued. Compared with the more diverse responses to political conflict during the 1790s, the outbreak of war again in 1803 revealed British women's largely hostile

attitudes towards the French nation. For them, the British constitution was the only way to bring stability and liberty and it had stood the test of time. As Part Three maintains, the images of Napoleon Bonaparte fabricated by British female travellers from the late 1790s to 1815 reveal the character of British national consciousness in wartime. Napoleon's image was not only based on eyewitness observations, but also adorned with their various political inclinations.

The female travel writing of 1814 and 1815 discloses a bitter tone against Napoleon and an endorsement of British national identity. For most women travellers, as we have seen in Chapter 9, France did not benefit from the experience of the Revolution and Napoleonic wars: France became more unstable and its people lost their confidence in their country. Moreover, in the eyes of these women, the moral crusade led by the British had destroyed the evil tyrant Napoleon and restored liberty to Europe. The superiority of Britain, whose constitution had protected liberty for centuries, in contrast to the oppressive, insincere, and immoral regime of the French, was assumed by the majority of British women travellers. Consequently, their writings reveal to us that the war against France and the fear of invasion enormously stimulated the British people's national awareness in the Napoleonic era. As the thesis has stressed, to have a common pride in the past and to suffer together the strong fear of invasion were necessary to survival in the war and essential for the development of

nationalism. This is thus what Linda Colley has argued, that the eighteenth-century British forged their national identity largely through opposition to their hostile 'other', the French.⁵

The conclusion of my thesis also stressed that there were always other voices. There were still voices challenging the conservative identity of Britishness, such as Frances Burney's *The Wanderer*. The ideals of the French Revolution still touched the hearts of many young intellectuals, such as Mary Shelley. Reviewing the age on the basis of her own and her mother's eyewitness experiences in Europe, she offered her verdict on the French Revolution in her tale of *Frankenstein*, in which the creature shared the same fate as the Revolution. They were both benevolent and good originally, but without proper nurture, misery made them violent monsters. The efforts to create a 'new man' had proved dangerous and ultimately disastrous. While having believed in the enduring benefits of revolutionary ideals, Shelley argued that any benevolent aspiration must develop in a tolerant environment with proper guidance and restraint.

Travel was a process of self-discovery, therefore. In this discovery, many women, no matter whether they were influential thinkers, writers or whether they are now long forgotten, disclosed their courageous attitude in pursuing their liberty and

⁵ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (2nd edn., London, 2005).

goal of life, regardless of any frustrations en route. But travel was also a process of discovering others. Thus, in the age of the French Revolution, many women discussed contemporary political controversies in their travel writings by reference to what they had witnessed in Europe, and wrote about their ideals of social progress. What they had discussed and debated at the end of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth century were nothing less than the forerunners of today's conservatism and liberalism: two of the most important ideologies of western political philosophy, as well as two habits of mind extant across almost the whole Anglophone world.

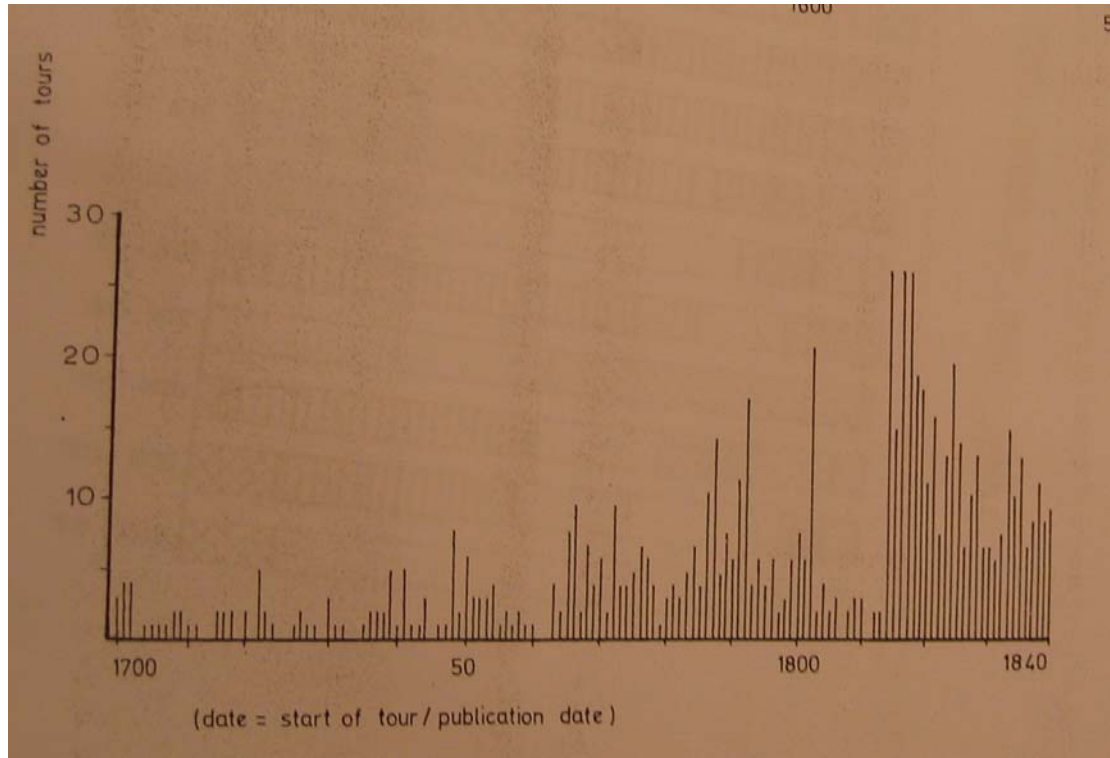
Like most self-conscious nation states, Britain still defines itself through a comparison with others, and for many Britons the most evident 'other' remains France. Some months ago at a conference, I met a British scholar who had lived in Australia for years. We had an informal conversation. I asked her what she missed most in Britain, and she answered: 'History, and France'. The British way of life is actually a dialogue with tradition, she said, with an expression of pride. In addition, like many others, she had become used to travelling to France frequently and enjoyed French life, although she sometimes liked to compare the different cultures of the two countries. This conversation indicated two characteristics of many British people today: conservatism, which is integrated with patriotism, and their special relationship with France, which can be seen as both friendship and enmity. On completing this thesis I

just realized in what context British historian E. H. Carr wrote his famous line: that history was an ‘unending dialogue between the present and the past’.⁶ History is not necessarily cold and dead. To understand and sympathize with the life and mind of a modern society is in a way to be close to past culture and society, and vice-versa.

⁶ E. H. Carr, *What is History?: the George Macauley Trevelyan lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge January-March 1961* (London, 1961), p. 30.

APPENDIX A

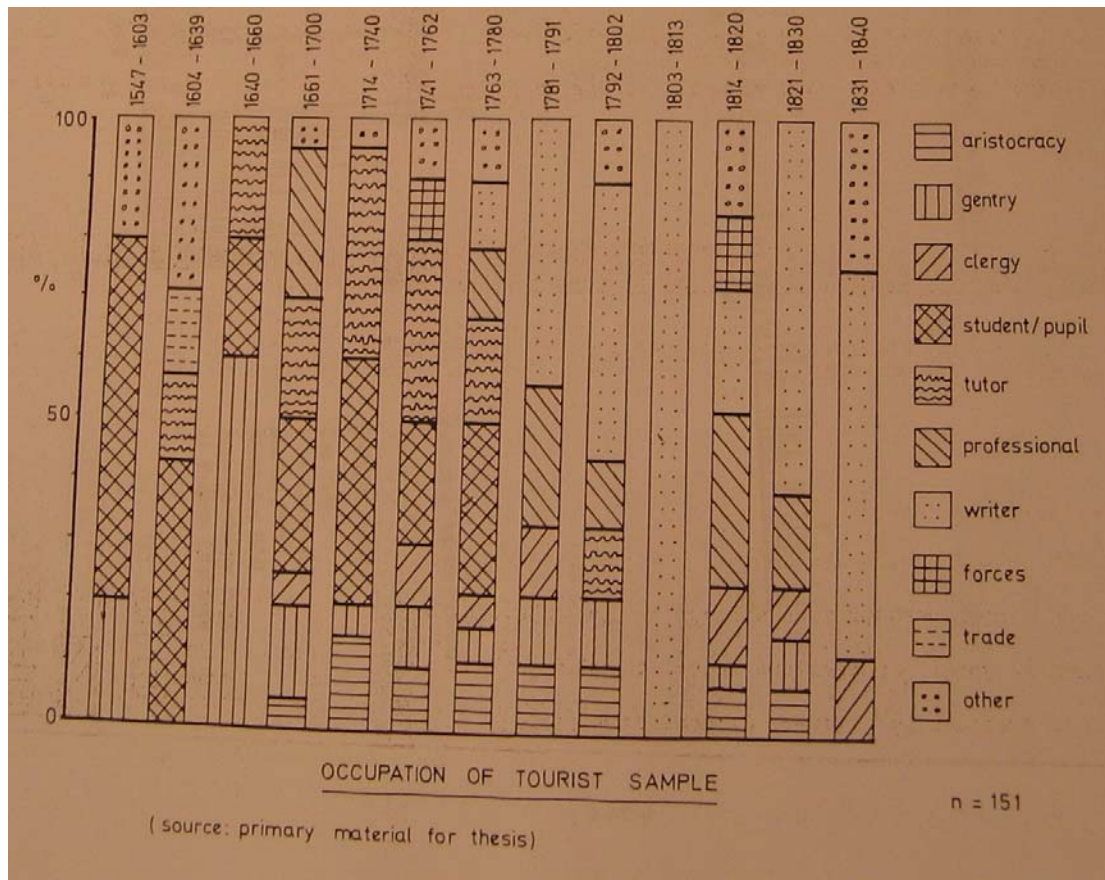
Male and Female Grand Tourists to Western Europe¹



Sources: Towner, John, *The European Grand Tour, circa 1550-1840: a Study of its Role in the History of Tourism* (Ph.D. Thesis, Birmingham, 1984), figure 1.

¹ Excluding Iberian Peninsula. Towner's mainly male sources were traced from *A Reference Guide to the Literature of Travel*, ed. Edward Godfrey Cox (3 vols., Seattle, 1949); R. S. Pine-Coffin, *Bibliography of British and American Travel in Italy to 1860* (Firenze, 1974); John Martin, *Bibliographical Catalogue of Privately Printed Books* (London, 1854); *British Diaries: An Annotated Bibliography of British Diaries Written between 1442 and 1942*, ed. W. Matthews (London, 1950); and *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English literature*, ed. George Watson (Cambridge, 1969-1977).

Occupation of Tourist Sample



Sources: John Towner, *The European Grand Tour, circa 1550-1840: a Study of its Role in the History of Tourism* (Ph.D. Thesis, Birmingham, 1984), figure 9.

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